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ABSTRACT

This longitudinal case study investigated issues that influence successful talent development in the arts and examined the effects of long-term artistic involvement on the lives of 23 artistically talented young people (ages 10-26) in New York City, all of whom had participated in a dance or music program in their elementary years. Most students were economically disadvantaged and from minority or culturally different backgrounds. Interviews were conducted with the students, their families, arts instructors, school teachers, and others. Four factors emerged as the primary obstacles to talent development: family circumstances, lack of affordable or appropriate instructional opportunities, peer resentment and social stigma, and the conflict between personal dreams and practical realities. The study also identified four factors key to student success in overcoming these obstacles: family support, instructional opportunities, community and school support, and innate personal qualities and psychological competencies. Evaluation of student accomplishments and observable behaviors concluded that 21 of the 23 students had achieved successful outcomes. Results have implications for development of interventions and programs to help young people with talent and drive but few opportunities. (Contains 92 references.) (DB)

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THE NATIONAL RESEARCH CENTER ON THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

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FORWARD

The Secret of Talent Development

Joseph S. Renzulli
The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented

When it comes to talent development, the arts education community has always had a little secret that is generations, if not centuries, ahead of the rest of the field of education: expose young people to a variety of forms and modes of expression, give them opportunities to explore and perform in their area(s) of interest, provide resources and encouragement that escalates their levels of technique, performance, and attitude, and carefully observe which students can benefit from ever-increasing degrees of involvement in their chosen art forms. Approaching youngsters through their strength areas, and using actual involvement in performance-based situations as criteria for making programming decisions is a far cry from the deficiency-oriented and test driven approaches that have become so prominent in the general education scene.

In recent years, general educators are starting to get the message! What has been the normal and very successful *modus operandi* of artists for eons and eons is now starting to find its way into identification and programming practices in all areas of the curriculum. Using currently popular terms such as performance-based assessment, hands-on learning, constructivist learning, and portfolio assessment, general educators are "discovering" what has been common knowledge in the arts. And now, the arts community is taking another new and bold step forward by developing a methodology that has great potential for promoting talent development in economically disadvantaged, inner city youth.

I first became familiar with the work of ArtsConnection in the Fall of 1990 when this organization received one of the first grants under the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act. The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented was asked to help design research that would examine a program called Talent Beyond Words. This program sought to study the nature of artistic talent and to develop a new process for identifying artistic talent in inner city schools that were lacking in even the most basic services in the arts. The research on Talent Beyond Words indicated that very positive effects accrued for both teachers and students as a result of participation in this program, the success of which led to a second Javits Grant and continued efforts to refine the talent development process for economically disadvantaged, inner city youth.

This work has been continued in organized initiatives like the Young Talent Program, and it is very gratifying, but not surprising, that the effects of artistic talent development described in this report closely parallel the work on talent development that has become the present day focus of gifted education advocates. The methods and approaches of gifted education, once reserved for the top 5% of academic achievers, are now being widely applied across broader segments of the school population and across all areas of the curriculum. Programs like the Young Talent Program are not designed to limit access to just a "gifted" few. Rather, they provide introductory, general exploratory opportunities for all students (Type I Experiences in my Enrichment Triad Model); and all students are given a series of classes designed to provide skills and background in various art forms (Type II Enrichment). With an introduction to, and systematic background in the art areas, students who clearly demonstrate high levels of interest and motivation are given the opportunity to move as fast and as far as they can in creative/productive endeavors (Type III Enrichment), usually working with professionals, participating in performances, and receiving assistance for gaining access to financial support for higher education.

It is obvious that when we give students opportunities, resources, and encouragement in areas of their strengths and interests, and when we allow them to pursue at least some of their learning in ways that are in keeping with their own learning style preferences, the kinds of growth in learning far exceed a prescribed, one-size-fits-all curriculum. What is even more gratifying is that this approach to talent identification and development introduces the most important element of all into the hours and years that young people spend in school. And that element is enjoyment! When enjoyment becomes the first goal of learning, everything else falls into place easily and naturally. Personal characteristics such as identity, self-regulation, resilience, and flow, essential elements for effective learning, were highly present in students participating in the Young Talent Program, as were manifestations of personal growth, parental support, favorable attitudes toward school, and a broad interest in future careers. Students participating in the program made impressive progress in academic performance as well as their talent areas.

Once again, a program in the arts has shown the way for overcoming the many concerns that place economically disadvantaged students at risk—concerns such as school safety, negative peer pressure, lack of challenging instruction, family responsibilities, and dangerous neighborhoods and surroundings. The secret of talent development that has been the hallmark of arts education is now making inroads into the population that has presented the greatest challenge for American educators. Now is the time for us to share this secret through communication vehicles such as the one presented in this report, and it is beyond the time for persons in general education to open up their eyes, minds, and hearts to the secrets that artists have known for centuries.

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ABSTRACT

This longitudinal case study investigated issues that influence successful talent development in the arts and looked at the effects of long-term artistic involvement on the lives of 23 artistically talented young people in New York City. A widely varied group of students aged 10-26, who had all taken part in a dance or music program in their elementary school years, participated in the study. Interviews with the students, their families, arts instructors, school teachers, and other interested adults, provided multiple perspectives on their development as artists and the place that the arts played in their lives. The students' achievements and progress in both the arts and in school were examined through direct observations, academic records, and evaluations from arts instructors.

The key issues of the study concern the nature of the obstacles faced by economically disadvantaged and minority students in pursuing artistic talent development and the factors that help some students overcome those obstacles. This study provides information that can help schools, cultural institutions, community organizations, and parents design interventions and programs to help young people who have the talent and drive, but few opportunities to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While the nation calls for recognition of outstanding talent among its youth, little information exists about the identification and nurturance of artistic talent in students from economically disadvantaged circumstances. Most models of talent development are based on studies of people born into a family who both valued their talents and had the financial means to support their development. This report describes the findings of a study funded by the Champions of Change program of the GE Fund, conducted by researchers from The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, that followed current and former students of a performing arts program in the New York City Public Schools. That program, Young Talent, provided by ArtsConnection, a not-for-profit arts in education organization, has been in existence for 20 years, providing the researchers with the opportunity to examine the conditions, experiences, and realities of talent development for a diverse spectrum of urban students over an extended period of time.

The study followed 23 children and young adults in three different stages of talent development in music and dance—elementary school; intermediate school; and high school, college, and professional or semi-professional careers. A high percentage of the students in the program come from economically disadvantaged circumstances and attend or attended schools with no arts specialists. Over half of them had, at one time, been labeled as at-risk for school failure due to poor grades, absences, behavioral, or family issues. The effect of sustained study in an art form on these young people provides powerful evidence for the crucial role of talent development in the arts to help students achieve their artistic, educational, and personal potentials.

Through extended interviews with the students, their parents and families, arts instructors, current and former academic teachers; observations in both school and professional settings; and the collection of academic data, common elements emerged across ages and stages of development. While the basic factors of parent support, instructional opportunities, and personal commitment corroborate the essential findings of previous studies of talented young people in a variety of fields including the arts (Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993), this study highlights important differences

in the nature and impact of those factors as they relate to diverse, economically disadvantaged, urban populations.

The researchers were interested in uncovering and identifying relationships between and among factors in three areas:

1. What are the obstacles to talent development faced by urban students from a variety of cultures, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic levels?
2. What are the factors that helped these students overcome the obstacles to develop their talents?
3. What is the impact of talent development in the arts on their lives?

To investigate these research questions, the study focused on children and young adults as significant stages in long-term study in the arts.

Four factors emerged as the primary obstacles to talent development: family circumstances, lack of affordable or appropriate instructional opportunities, peer resentment and social stigma, and the conflict between personal dreams and practical realities. All of these factors are, of course, highly interrelated. The lack of financial resources can contribute to all of the obstacles, but poverty alone cannot be blamed for the potential roadblocks students encounter.

The primary obstacles changed significantly as students moved through the stages of development from elementary school through adulthood and from novice to expert. For the youngest cohort, the first major obstacle students faced was the low probability of having their artistic talents identified and developed. Family circumstances, including lack of transportation and supervision for activities outside of the school day, the need for young students to take on major household responsibilities, and parents' concerns for safety, all presented major hurdles to talent development in elementary and intermediate school. The four new immigrants (less than 5 years in the United States) faced extreme difficulties brought on by family dissolution and lack of availability of employment, housing, and social services that placed serious obstacles in the way of talent development.

As students reached intermediate school, lack of peer support and social stigma grew as obstacles. Many students felt the need to hide their artistic accomplishments from their classmates. The intermediate students also faced the problem of finding appropriately challenging and appealing instructional opportunities. Arts instruction was not available at many intermediate schools and students had to make the transition to voluntary, self-directed talent development either in or outside of school. Some found that their early training did not match the requirements of magnet or other intermediate school arts programs. Scholarships at professional training institutions were highly competitive and often available only to older students. Individual or small group lessons were prohibitively expensive and most community-based classes were too elementary for students with prior training.

During high school, the conflict between dreams and realities became the most serious obstacle. Most had already made the decision to move towards serious study by the time they reached eighth grade, as signaled by their application to magnet arts high schools. Once in high school, students had to consider the costs and sacrifices of continuing in the arts while weighing college choices. Some parents raised concerns and challenged their commitment to continue training. At this stage, the physical and emotional demands of the field increased significantly and the young artists' decisions were highly affected by external circumstances. An injury, illness of a family member, changes in training routine, or change

in school or work schedule could all have an immediate and a devastating impact on their artistic aspirations.

The second research question revealed four major factors that were key to the students' success in overcoming the obstacles they faced—family support, instructional opportunities, community and school support, and innate personological considerations. These factors comprise a complex interaction of internal resources and external interventions that resulted, for the most part, in students continuing their pursuit of the arts and developing the skills and personal qualities seen as outcomes in Research Question 3.

For all three cohorts, development of talent depended upon a combination of family and community support and their own intrinsic drive. Family support and sacrifice was the most universal factor seen in all of the cases of successful students. This finding is consistent with all of the talent development literature, but the nature of the support was often different than has been reported in more affluent populations. Family support in these cases was not limited to parents. The entire extended family, including siblings and grandparents, neighbors and other community members were all important sources of assistance and encouragement. While many of the parents were not active in other school activities, they made remarkable sacrifices, including changing jobs, adjusting work and vacation schedules, and making complex child-care arrangements to allow their children to participate in their arts classes and performances. The parents' primary concern for academics rarely interfered with their support for the arts.

The second obvious success factor was the presence of a talent identification and development program in the elementary schools. A large percentage of the students and families felt that without that early exposure at school, they would never have discovered their interest or pursued their talent. The program provided professional artists as teachers who became important role models and often mentors for the students. These first teachers maintained a place of importance even as students progressed through school and found other teachers and mentors. In addition, the program provided adult support and supervision for after-school classes and weekend events, established and maintained direct contact with families, and supplied information and assistance to families about other educational and artistic opportunities.

Community and school support was enhanced through yearly introductory classes provided for all of the upper grade classes in the elementary schools. This involvement was found to be a key element in building support for the advanced students on the part of teachers and peers and decreasing jealousy and negative peer pressure. All students had multiple opportunities to join the advanced group and gained a greater understanding and appreciation for the accomplishments of the advanced students. Additional program components included weekend family workshops open to the entire school and whole school performances by high quality professional artists, which created an atmosphere that was conducive to talent development and provided additional motivation for advanced students.

The key personological characteristics included an early interest in the arts, a family who valued and participated in the arts, a personality that thrived on challenge, and a sense of professionalism. Students at all three levels of development expressed their constant desire for novel and challenging experiences and clearly thrived on demanding and potentially stress-producing situations, such as performing for an audience.

As in Research Question 1, different factors seemed to come to the fore at each stage of development. During the novice stage, students needed to have their talents identified and developed through available instruction. Once offered this opportunity,

family, community, and peer support became essential. Adults, including arts instructors, family members, and teachers, conveyed their belief that talent development was important and took action to make it possible for students to participate. Together with the school and outside agency, the family and community insured that students were safe and that talent development did not interfere with schoolwork.

As students progressed from elementary through high school, their primary sources of support shifted from the family to professional sources and their internal drive emerged more forcefully. As emerging artists, students needed a higher level of instruction, offering a challenging curriculum, performance opportunities, and pre-professional experiences. Contact with peers who shared similar interests and talents became critical to overcoming competition from other social influences. Intrinsic motivation had to increase as daily practice became necessary, rehearsals and classes become longer, and schoolwork and home obligations had to be juggled to accommodate an increased focus on talent development.

The final research question investigated the current circumstances of students in each cohort and attempted to uncover the role the arts have played in their development. Given the fact that students were chosen for the study based on their artistic success or demonstrated potential, the question was posed: What are the obstacles to talent development faced by urban students from a variety of cultures, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic levels?

To study the effects of the arts, outcomes were analyzed and combined into themes in two dimensions—as psychological competencies or personal qualities, and as accomplishments and observable behaviors. The primary competencies and qualities were found to be a) increased capacity to experience flow, b) demonstrated self-regulatory behaviors, c) the development of identity, and d) resilience. These qualities are clearly highly interrelated—each being commonly used to define each other throughout the literature. However, each quality was distinctly articulated by students and their parents and teachers as they linked artistic involvement to general development both in and outside of school. Obviously, these outcomes were most fully developed in the oldest cohort, but there was significant evidence of development in all four areas in students in each cohort.

All of the students described their experience of being in flow during arts classes. The older students described how the feelings of the flow, including the suspension of time and outside concerns, increased during ever longer classes and rehearsals. As one young adult said, "It's like I became addicted to dance." Students talked about many specific ways in which the habits and discipline learned and practiced in the arts helped them to self-regulate and use successful strategies to succeed in school. A member of the Intermediate Cohort linked playing in a music ensemble to classroom skills, saying,

> I think you call it mind over movement. You have to really listen to the song and while you're playing you still have to listen to make sure you're in the right key. So you use your mind to tell you the part of the song and you use movement to keep playing it and doing what you're doing. The mind over movement has helped me listen and take notes at the same time.

Both group membership and personal accomplishment were stressed in relation to the development of identity. Students developed deep, lasting connections to the other members of the group. "It's like you're connected through your mind. It's like this telepathic thing," as one student described it. Now in high school, she said that these elementary school friendships "form the basis for my friendships now." Others spoke about their artistic achievements as providing the strength and confidence to overcome negative peer pressure and maintain their talent development despite criticism or jealousy from peers. Resilience

was strikingly demonstrated by many of the students in all three cohorts who maintained their involvement in talent development despite the illness and death of parents, family breakups, frequent dislocations, and other situations that could easily derail less resilient individuals. They spoke of their art form as both a haven and an inspiration to survive and achieve their goals.

The accomplishments and observable behaviors were defined in three dimensions: a) the degree to which students were able to develop their talent, b) academic progress and aspirations, and c) behaviors that demonstrate personal development that can help them in other areas. Specific benchmarks included awards, scholarships, and professional level training; academic progress as measured by grades and test scores (where available); completion of high school or engagement in post-secondary education; and employment and career progress. Observable behaviors involved the application of skills and talents in career or personal life and the discipline and motivation demonstrated in pursuing interests and responsibilities.

Based on these criteria, 21 of the 23 students had achieved successful outcomes. Of the 6 students in the High School-Adult Cohort, all are still involved in dance or other artistic pursuits. One went directly into a professional dance career after high school; 1 is pursuing a dance career after college; 2 are in college (majoring in dance therapy and psychology); and 2 are in high school planning to go to college. Five of the 6 in the Intermediate Cohort are making good progress in school and planning to attend college immediately after high school. All 6 are still involved in music. Outcomes for the Elementary Cohort are incomplete. Nine of the 11 students received positive evaluations from their instructors and were recommended to continue in the Young Talent Program or Alumni program (for graduates of the in-school program).

The overall goal of the study was to deepen the understanding of and appreciation for the challenges faced by young artists and the potential for artistic involvement to affect their lives. The results contradict many common stereotypes, particularly as regards parental and family support for talent development and the place the arts hold in the family and school communities. While economic and personal challenges placed numerous serious obstacles in the students' way, the active support of family members, teachers, school administrators, and peers took on many forms and was essential for successful talent development. Cultural values that embrace the arts as part of the family, community, and religious life balanced the pressure on students to give up the arts to concentrate solely on academics and to pursue more potentially lucrative career choices. Students and their families were highly realistic about the viability of the arts as a career, but saw the arts as a permanent part of their lives.

The impact of the long-term serious arts instruction and performance was seen in the development of personal qualities, competencies, and habits that served students in the arts, in school, and outside of school. These qualities, which build on the personality traits, talents, and instilled values that attracted students to the arts in the first place, demonstrate the potential for talent development to enhance personal growth and overcome the obstacles that could easily derail a young person's progress.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

All young people face challenges in developing their talents. For aspiring artists the road is particularly arduous. Many dream of an artistic career, but few can foresee the obstacles they will have to confront on the way to that goal. Artistic development requires a substantial financial and time commitment on the part of both the student and parents. It is a long-term process that suffers from missing even a summer of study. Inevitably, chance plays a part in every artistic success story—finding the right teacher, the right style, the right group, the right break.

Even in the most favorable circumstances most students end their formal study of the arts during early adolescence. A small percentage of students, regardless of talent, successfully make the transition from successful childhood arts instruction to more rigorous on going study. Involvement in the arts decreases precipitously both in and outside of school between 8th and 10th grades (Catterall, 1997a). A number of factors contribute to this decline. Intermediate and high schools are less likely than elementary schools to offer regular arts instruction for all students and those programs tend to be narrowly focused on a specific artistic style or genre. Parents have less control and influence on their children's out of school activities and social interests compete for time and attention. Students need support and encouragement to maintain their studies and a regular practice schedule at the very time their increased independence makes it harder for parents or teachers to provide that support. In his extensive work on talent development, Bloom (1985) asserts that " . . . no matter what the initial characteristics of the individuals, unless there is a long and intensive process of encouragement, nurturance, education, and training, the individuals will not attain extreme levels of capability in these particular fields" (p. 3).

For children lacking the advantages of financial resources and consistent family support, the task of maintaining involvement in the arts can be a daunting personal challenge. As Csikzentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) state in their study of talented teenagers,

> A disproportionate number of disadvantaged children lose heart because they believe that after many years of hard training they will still fail to reap any benefit from their

> talent. Only substantial changes in the life prospects of disadvantaged ethnic groups will relieve this source of attrition. (p. 2)

In fact, they conclude that much of talent development "depends on the social milieu into which the person happens to be born: their racial, ethnic, and economic class of origin" (p. 38). In a field such as the arts, where financial rewards are so uncertain, intensive study may seem totally irrelevant and frivolous.

The benefits of discovering and developing one's talents cannot be measured only by eventual success in a specific field. Many influential educators and researchers emphasize the importance of talent development as a key to educational and personal development. Students engaged in an area of interest and strength perform better in school, spend less time watching television, socialize with more appropriate and positive peer groups, and make more informed choices about their futures (Baum, Renzulli, & Hébert, 1993; Catterall, 1997b; Omdal, 1995; Reis, Hébert, Diaz, Maxfield, & Ratley, 1995). As Darling-Hammond (1996) argues, what is needed is an education

> . . . that seeks competence as well as community, that enables all people to find and act on who they are, what their passions, gifts, and talents may be, what they care about, and how they want to make a contribution to each other and the world. (p. 5)

For some, talent development will lead directly to achievement in a particular field, but for many others the process of focused involvement in an area of strength will develop skills, confidence, and habits that can contribute to success in any future endeavor (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986; Dewey, 1933; Eisner, 1985; Gardner, 1990).

According to a report from the United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (1993), the United States is failing to recognize and develop the potential of many of its students. The report acknowledges that effective talent development programs exist throughout the country, but they tend to be very narrow in their scope and substance. Most schools do not consider talent development as a priority. In fact, far more money is spent on remediating weaknesses than on nurturing talent. When there are limited opportunities for talent development, many students may lose their motivation for learning and fail to develop confidence in their own ability to learn and be successful. Unfortunately, when children lose these qualities, their self-esteem drops, and they may stop trying.

Lack of opportunity is particularly widespread in the arts where cutbacks in recent years have severely limited instructional opportunities for students both in school and in their communities ("Study Finds," 1998). The extent of the decrease in arts classes is striking in comparison to other industrialized countries and to the level of arts opportunities available to all children in the United States just 30 years ago, when most schools had full-time specialists in one or more art forms (Love & Kipple, 1995). In 1994, fewer than 50% of eighth graders nationally had regular music instruction, and 90% had no theater class (Catterall, 1997a). Only 4% of elementary schools had a dance specialist. Visiting artists-in-residence supply instruction on a limited basis in 14% of elementary schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

Access to arts instruction has decreased dramatically in the inner city. Schools facing severe overcrowding due to immigration, neighborhood changes, and crumbling facilities have responded by cutting arts specialists, outside programs, and after-school activities. In New York City's public schools, once served by specialists in all four major art forms, fewer than one third of schools have any full-time arts specialists (Chira, 1993). Community centers and churches that once were the breeding grounds for bands, dance

ensembles, and theater groups now focus their services more heavily on adult literacy, teen pregnancy, and other serious health and safety issues (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992).

For poor and middle class families whose schools and communities have few arts resources, the options for talent development in the arts are limited. Children of affluent families are twice as likely to be involved in arts instruction as lower socioeconomic groups (Catterall, 1997a). Differences in involvement rates are also striking across ethnic and cultural groups. Whites are 50% more likely to have taken classes in music, visual arts, ballet, dance other than ballet, creative writing, and music appreciation than African-Americans, Hispanics, or Asian-Americans. This discrepancy has widened by as much as 10% between 1982 and 1992 (Love & Kipple, 1995). As Lavinia Mancuso, a principal from a school in East Harlem points out,

> The problem is not that the politicians are not aware of the importance of the arts. Their children have arts in school and go to ballet class and music lessons after school. The problem is that they don't believe that all children need and deserve the arts. (personal communication, May 15, 1996)

Few studies have examined the current conditions for talent development in the arts faced by diverse populations, especially those from economically disadvantaged circumstances. Investigations and personal memoirs tend to focus on those individuals who had the necessary financial and personal support to achieve success and gain recognition in their talent field. While these retrospective accounts undoubtedly capture many of the crucial steps in talent development, they present a picture that is limited in scope and tends to be far different than the experience of a large percentage of children growing up in the 1990s in urban America. The in-depth studies on talented individuals by Bloom (1985) and Csikzentmihalyi et al. (1993) intentionally limit themselves to a sample of primarily White, middle class children because of the confounding and often detrimental effects of poverty on talent development. Diversity of cultures, changes in immigration, housing patterns, and community development create a very different landscape than the one pictured in Bloom's view (Ogbu, 1988).

This study was an attempt to provide information lacking in previous research by examining the conditions, experiences, and realities of talent development for a wide spectrum of urban students. While certain opportunities exist in New York City that may not be available for students and schools in all cities, the city's five boroughs provided a highly diverse and realistic laboratory in which to study the problems of opportunity and access to the arts across cultures, communities, and art forms. The study looked at children and young adults at different stages of deep, committed learning in the arts. Often the best vantage point for appreciating the scope and meaning of an individual's talent is when the outcome is in doubt, when obstacles arise, at the passage to a new stage, and when decisions are required. The young people in this study are involved in a process. They have not yet reached their goals and have countless daily decisions to make.

We hoped that what we could discover from meeting them and their families would help us better understand and appreciate the nature of their challenges and the potential of artistic talent to affect their lives. From a practical perspective, we felt that there is a great deal that schools, cultural institutions, community organizations, and parents can learn that can help them design interventions and programs to help young people who have the talent and the drive, but few opportunities to pursue their dreams.

CHAPTER 2: Method

Research Questions

The overall purpose of this study was to examine both the process and effect of talent development on a highly diverse group of urban youngsters. The report describes the talent development experiences over the past 20 years of students who have participated in an arts-in-education program developed by ArtsConnection, a New York City arts-in-education organization. Three major research questions were posed to provide insight into the factors that led to students' success and allowed them to overcome some of the obstacles that children, particularly those from economically disadvantaged situations, face. In addition, the study provided empirical evidence on the effects of talent recognition and development on the students' academic, social, and emotional lives. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What are the obstacles to talent development faced by urban students from a variety of cultures, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic levels?
2. What are the factors that helped these students overcome the obstacles to develop their talents?
3. What is the impact of talent development in the arts on their lives?

Research Design

To address the questions raised by this study, a longitudinal, qualitative, multi-case study design was used. Longitudinal methodology involves measures of the same individual over time, which allows for intra-individual comparison of a phenomenon at different stages. Comparisons within and between subjects can provide information about typical stages associated with the development of the targeted phenomenon (Subotnik & Arnold, 1993). The qualitative multi-case study approach allows for a holistic, in-depth study of a phenomenon. This approach focuses on the complex dynamic of a system that caused the phenomenon within a context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moon, 1991). Thus, students' individual journeys in talent development could be observed over time within the context of the ArtsConnection program, the family, school, and social environment. Data were collected over the course of the students' involvement with the Young Talent Program (YTP) and after graduation when they were studying on their own. The sources of data included in-depth structured and semi-structured interviews of the students, their families, teachers, and ArtsConnection personnel; observations of students during talent identification activities, talent development lessons, and on-stage performances; student focus group interviews; questionnaires; and school records and documents.

Intervention

Students in the study were current or former participants in the YTP, provided by ArtsConnection in their elementary school. The program, begun in 1979, served approximately 400 students in eight New York City public elementary schools each year with instruction in dance, music, or theater. All of the cases in the study were drawn from the dance or music components of the programs because the theater component, begun in 1996, had not produced any graduates at the time of the study.

The YTP provided introductory experiences for all students and more rigorous instruction for students who were identified as potentially talented. The central purpose of the program was not to develop professional artists. Rather, the program was designed to raise awareness and appreciation of the artistic abilities of all students and to recognize and develop the outstanding talents of many students who would not be identified as gifted and talented through academic tests or other traditional means.

The basic talent development program consisted of weekly arts classes for 25 weeks between October and May for students in grades four, five, and six. The classes were taught in the school by a team of two professional artists, assisted by an ArtsConnection Site Coordinator. Fifth and sixth grade students also attended 5 to 10 classes per year at professional studios and cultural institutions around the city. The curriculum was designed to be challenging and broad in scope, to give students opportunities to learn a variety of styles and techniques, and to develop their skills in the art form. Program graduates (intermediate and high school students) were eligible to continue instruction free of charge on Saturdays at ArtsConnection's Center in midtown Manhattan.

The YTP model evolved over time and was slightly different for each cohort in the study. When the program began in 1979, arts instruction was conducted in professional studios. Students selected by professional artists for advanced instruction traveled on school buses, one or two mornings a week, to classes at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater near Times Square. Academic tutoring was provided free of charge to help offset missed class time for students with academic difficulties. In 1984, the program changed and the majority of instruction was held in each school with a short series of classes in professional studios and training institutions. All but two of the students in the study began the program between 1984 and 1999 when the school-based instructional model was in place.

In 1990, a number of new components were added to the program. Through a Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education grant from the United States Department of Education (Talent Beyond Words, U.S. Department of Education Grant Number R206A00148), a new process for identifying potentially talented students in dance and music was developed and tested. In this process, artists and classroom teachers worked together to assess the talent of the students over a series of five to seven classes. This new system was a marked improvement over the previous single-day process conducted by the professional artists alone. It was shown to be valid, reliable, and equitable to students of various cultures and language backgrounds, and an excellent predictor of success in the advanced instructional program (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1996).

As part of the Javits program, all students in the upper grades participated in arts classes, workshops were offered for teachers and parents, instruction for advanced students was increased to twice a week, and an after school component was added. Student ensembles in both music and dance performed widely around the city and outside of New York. An alumni program for junior high school students in dance and music began in 1993 for students graduating the elementary school program. A timeline of major program changes is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Young Talent Program Design

1978-1983	1984-1990	1990-1999
• Program classes conducted at Alvin Ailey Theater • 1-day talent identification process	• Classes held in schools with occasional workshops in professional studios • 1-day talent identification	• Javits Program – music component begun • 2-days per week in-school and after-school instruction • Multi-day talent identification • Expanded tutoring component • Parent liaison

Sample

Cohorts and Stages of Talent Development

Students in this study were selected from a pool of 400 current students and more than 1,500 program graduates. A total of 32 students deemed potentially successful in their talent area were originally recommended by arts instructors, teachers, and ArtsConnection staff members. Out of these, 23 students were selected for this study based on sampling procedures that differed for each cohort, according to the special circumstances and status criteria existing at each level. The other 9 students were left out primarily because of difficulties in contacting them or obtaining consent to participate in the study. Overall, the final sample included 12 females and 11 males, with 16 African-Americans, 5 Latinos, and 2 Caucasians. Income information was not available for all families. As an indicator, approximately 19 of the 23 students were or had been eligible for free lunch in school.

To obtain a developmental understanding of how talent is nurtured and evolves, three cohorts, or groups, of students were chosen, identified by age and grade level. The elementary (11 students, ages 10-12, grades 4-6), intermediate (6 students, ages 13-16, grades 7-9), and high school/adult (6 students, age 17-26, sophomore through post-scholastic) cohorts were distinguished by the type and level of arts instruction available to them. Elementary school students participated in the YTP at their school. Intermediate school students had fewer instructional opportunities at school and traveled to ArtsConnection on Saturdays to continue lessons. At high school level and beyond, arts instruction was completely voluntary and required a personal commitment of time and money.

While the cohorts were defined by age, individuals within each cohort represented three major stages of talent development in a progression from novice to emerger to expert. These phases, recognized by both cognitive psychologists (Bruer, 1993; Newell & Simon, 1972) and developmental psychologists (Bloom, 1985; Csikzentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986; Feldman, 1986; Gardner, 1993) are defined by skills, motivation, and readiness for more advanced and challenging instruction and opportunities. In the arts, distinctions between stages are particularly fluid and cannot be generalized to all students of a particular age or

experience level. There were fifth and sixth grade students in the study, for example, who attended classes at professional dance studios and were invited to perform with adult companies. These students were more advanced in their skills and motivation than some of the intermediate or senior high school students. Thus, while most students in each cohort fit the developmental profile of elementary-novice, intermediate-emerger, or high school-adult-expert, the students' age and stage do not necessarily correspond.

Table 2 describes general benchmarks associated with each stage of development that were developed as part for the study, based on the specific yearly evaluation criteria of the professional teaching artists.

The High School-Adult Cohort participated in the YTP between 1979 and 1990. Students comprising this group were in high school, college, or had completed their formal education. The Intermediate Cohort began the elementary school program in 1990-91 at the start of the Javits grant and were in intermediate or high school during the study. The elementary group began the program between 1992 and 1995 and were still in elementary school.

Table 2

Benchmarks for Stages of Talent Development

Stage	Skills	Entrance Requirements	Performance Expectations
Novice	• natural ability and interest	• parent interest • talent identification process in school or studio	• adequate progress in arts classes • regular attendance • perform publically
Emerger	• ability to work well with others • specialization in a style or instrument • ability to learn complex material	• audition for scholarships and training • recommendation by arts instructors	• maintain attendance • home practice • availability for out of school rehearsal and performances
Expert	• ability to remember and reproduce complex material • ability to set personal short- and long-term goals and objectives	• established repertoire • audition for magnet arts school, college, and professional opportunities • portfolio or recommendation from teacher/mentors	• maintain physical and mental health • demonstrate confidence on stage • good progress in class • self-control and leadership

High School-Adult Cohort

Nomination for the High School-Adult Cohort was based on the following requirements: alumnus of the YTP; at least 16 years old; recommended by an ArtsConnection faculty, staff member, or experts in their fields; and pursuing talent development in high school or beyond. They attained professional or semi-professional status in dance or declared their intention to incorporate dance in their lives or careers in some way. Only dancers were included in the High School-Adult Cohort because the music program, which began in 1990, had not yet produced any students above the intermediate school level.

Obtaining a sample pool for the High School-Adult Cohort proved the most arduous of the three groups. Most potential subjects had reached adulthood and no longer resided at their last address listed in ArtsConnection and school records. As a result, the high school-adult sample was culled from a pool of available and accessible graduates who either maintained contact with ArtsConnection, continued to be active with the organization through the Alumni Program, had received professional recognition, or were nominated by peers. While the original pool of 30 cases could be considered a convenience sample as defined by Patton (1990), final selection of the six cases was based on purposeful criterion sampling of the pool including extreme case, stratified purposeful and intensity sampling (pp. 182-183) designed to provide the most credible and generalizable sample possible, given the small sample size and the common origin of the cases in the ArtsConnection program. Preliminary information used to select the sample included current and past training and career aspirations, current and prior personal and family obstacles, geographic diversity, and socioeconomic status. Detailed information on household income was difficult to obtain for this cohort due to the lack of contact with parents during the years since students left the program.

The sampling process yielded 6 graduates comprising the High School-Adult Cohort, ranging in age from 16 to 26 years old. Of the 4 females and 2 males, 5 were African-American and 1 was Latina. Three were alumni of elementary schools in East Harlem; 1 from Central Harlem; 1 from Red Hook, Brooklyn; and 1 from Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, who had participated in the YTP between 1980 and 1990 and continued to dance and seek dance training after elementary school. Five of the 6 continually auditioned for dance scholarships and schools. Five of the 6 attended a performing arts high school. Two make their living as professional dancers. At the time of the study, 3 were high school seniors, 1 was a high school freshman, and 2 were independent adults. Table 3 provides an overview of the 6 dancers constituting the high school-adult group.

Intermediate Cohort

The Intermediate Cohort was made up of students who began the Young Talent music program in 1991 and 1992. Students in this cohort attended the same elementary school and all continued their talent development after sixth grade by attending music classes offered by ArtsConnection on Saturdays. Some also participated in music classes or activities in their intermediate schools, when available, and in programs offered by other cultural institutions.

Table 3

Profile of High School-Adult Cohort

NAME	SEX	AGE	ETHNICITY	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT
Andrea	F	26	Latina	Expert. Professional dancer with several small companies
Angela	F	18	African-American	Emerger. ArtsConnection Alumni program, interested in dance as a lifelong skill
Randall	M	18	African-American	Expert. High school dance major, enrolled in arts institution, competitive dancer, aspires to be a professional dancer
Serita	F	18	African-American	Expert. High school dance major, college dance therapy major
Tawana	F	16	African-American	Expert. ArtsConnection Alumni program. Touring performer in musical theater, high school musical theater major
Tony	M	26	African-American	Expert. Professional dancer with major international company

The sample selected was the result of a serendipitous occurrence. Five years earlier, during the first year of the Jacob K. Javits program, 24 third-grade students were identified as musically talented through a talent identification process designed for the project (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1996; Kay & Subotnik, 1994). These students participated in a rigorous talent development program through sixth grade and 15 of them continued in the Saturday program. Of this group, 6 were selected by their instructor to form a semi-professional performing ensemble with him. They have performed locally and nationally both as a group and individually. Because these 6 students shared a common background, they could be considered a homogeneous sample (Patton, 1990).

All 6 are African-American. One lived with both parents, another with a grandmother, and a third with mother and extended family. The other 3 lived with their mothers. Exact family income data were unavailable, but all of the families had one or more working members and total income is estimated at between $19,000-$40,000 annually.

The stage of artistic development reached by the Intermediate Cohort coincides with the middle or emerger level of talent development defined by Bloom (1985) as usually occurring during adolescence. It is a time when students are engaged in rigorous training with an expert task master. The mentor/student relationship is potent during this time and expectations for performance and talent development are high (Bloom, 1985; Gardner, 1993). At this stage, students often encounter stiffer competition and are clearly distinguishable from their less talented peers. Because students at this stage have many competing interests and needs, the intermediate must intentionally choose to continue talent development activities (Csikzentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993). Table 4 provides an overview of the 6 students comprising the Intermediate Cohort.

Table 4

Profile of Intermediate Cohort

NAME	SEX	AGE	ETHNICITY	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT
Albert	M	15	African-American	Emerger. Attends Intermediate school with minimal music program. Member of performing percussion group
David	M	15	African-American	Emerger. Attends private school—does not study music in school. Member of performing percussion group
Gloria	F	15	African-American	Emerger. Studying fashion design. Member of performing percussion group
Jasmine	F	15	African-American	Emerger. Studies music in school. Member of performing percussion group
Simone	F	15	African-American	Emerger. Involved in theater in school but not music. Member of performing percussion group
Tarik	M	15	African-American	Emerger. Attends Julliard School on Saturdays. Member of performing percussion group

Elementary Cohort

The Elementary Cohort was comprised of 11 students between the ages of 10 and 12, in their second or third year (fifth or sixth grade) in the YTP. Students were nominated for inclusion in the study by arts instructors, ArtsConnection site coordinators, classroom teachers, and principals and had received excellent progress evaluations by their arts instructors. Nomination forms and follow up discussions yielded preliminary information about students' academic performance, family circumstances, and other personal profile data. It should be noted that while students in this cohort were identified as showing current promise in their arts classes, continued participation and success was far from certain. Students in all of the cohorts had been previously identified as possessing artistic talent and faced potential obstacles. The ability of the elementary group to face those obstacles and persevere in training had not yet been established.

Unlike the High School-Adult and Intermediate Cohorts, a large number of Elementary students were available to the researchers. Thus a representative sample of students could be sought from the pool of candidates, using criterion-based sampling strategies (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Criterion-based sampling is a purposive strategy designed to identify different categories of participants representing different defining attributes. Five categories were selected by the researchers for inclusion to study both common and extreme characteristics encountered among the original pool of nominees. The categories were identified as follows: a) typical (an average participant), b) unique (a participant possessing unusual attributes), c) reputational (a participant recommended by an experienced expert in the domain), d) ideal-typical (a participant possessing the most desirable features), and e) extreme (possessing traits different from the rest for comparison purposes).

The Elementary Cohort selected consisted of 11 students, 8 females and 3 males ranging in age from 10 to 12 years old. Five were African-American, 4 were Latino, and 2 were White. Four of the cohort immigrated to the United States within the previous 4 years. Six resided in single parent households, 4 resided in dual-parent households, and 1 lived with a grandmother and an extended family. All other cases except 1 had siblings living at home. In two cases, the natural mother was deceased.

Obtaining accurate information on socioeconomic status proved difficult. Only 6 of the 11 families responded to requests for income information. Two of the yearly incomes fell within the $12,000-$19,000 range, one between $19,000 and $26,000, and another reported earning between $48,000 and $60,000. At least 3 of the families who did not respond were on public assistance, and it is believed that the other two fell within the middle ($19,000-$26,000) income range. Of the 11 students in the Elementary Cohort, 7 are eligible for the free lunch program at school. Five of the respondents had at least 1 parent who obtained an education past high school, ranging from a minimum of 1 semester in college to a maximum of a graduate degree. Table 5 provides an overview of the 11 students comprising the Elementary Cohort.

Data Collection

In this longitudinal multiple case study approach, a variety of data were collected annually throughout the study. To gain an accurate and a reliable view of the phenomenon of talent development, multiple sources and methods were used. These multiple perspectives allowed for triangulation of data that could confirm or reject hypotheses (Moon, 1991). The data available varied for each cohort, but in all cases included in depth structured and semistructured interviews with the students and their families, arts instructors, and members of the ArtsConnection staff who regularly interacted with the students and their families. Data from current and past academic teachers, available for Elementary and Intermediate cohorts, was less readily accessible for the High School-Adult group.

A second method of data collection was field observations. Project researchers and outside experts observed students on repeated occasions during talent identification auditions, talent development lessons, and performances. A third method included systematic collection of standardized achievement test scores and school grades. Again, these data were less available for the High School-Adult Cohort than the other two cohorts that had been directly involved with the ArtsConnection program more recently. Finally, student progress evaluations in the arts, awards, scholarships and recognition in their talent area, and the outcome of auditions and ratings used in conjunction with talent development opportunities, were examined for students in all cohorts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis reflected the use of the constant comparative inductive method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), following the suggestions for coding put forth by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The first step used open coding where all transcripts were labeled and data segments noted using QSR Nud•ist 3.0 software (QSR, 1996). The second step involved axial coding, which categorized the initial codes into slightly more abstract groupings. In the third step, those categories were combined into major themes accounting for the relationship between and among the categories. Last, a theory was postulated by the generation of a conditional matrix showing how the findings relate to each other in a theoretical context (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 5

Profile of Elementary Cohort

NAME	SEX	AGE	ETHNIC	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT —SAMPLING CRITERIA
Andrew	M	11	African-American	Novice—Ideal/Typical- average to below average academic achievement, no prior music training, resides with grandparent and extended family
Anna	F	11	Latina	Novice—Reputational- average academic achievement, no prior dance training, dual-parent household
April	F	11	African-American	Novice—Typical- above average academic achievement, no prior dance training, dual-parent household
Bobby	M	11	African-American	Novice—Ideal/Typical- average to below average academic achievement, some prior dance training, poor school attendance, single-parent household
Carmela	F	12	Latina	Emerger—Reputational- Venezuelan immigrant, non-native speaker of English, average academic achievement, some prior dance training, single-parent household
Daphne	F	12	African-American	Novice—Typical- above average academic achievement, no prior music training, single-parent household
Fernando	M	11	Latino	Novice—Unique- Dominican Republic immigrant, non-native speaker of English, average academic achievement, no prior dance training, single-parent household
Heather	F	10	White	Novice—Extreme- above average academic achievement, daughter of professional dancers, ethnic minority in dance class, dual-parent household
Sara	F	10	White	Novice—Unique- Polish immigrant, non-native speaker of English, ethnic minority in music class. No prior music training, average academic achievement, single-parent household
Shavon	F	11	African-American	Novice—Typical- average academic achievement, no prior arts training, dual-parent household
Yvelis	F	12	Latina	Novice—Unique- Mexican immigrant, non-native speaker of English, above average academic achievement, no prior dance training, single-parent household

With the wide range of interview subjects in the study, and a multiple interview design, coding had to be continually refined and reanalyzed throughout the process. Coding procedures explained by Lincoln and Guba (1985)—filling in, extension, bridging, and surfacing—were used to clarify and synthesize the data. Specifically, filling in refers to creating new codes and themes as insights occur during the process. Extension describes the process of returning to previously coded data and interpreting them according to a new theme or category. Bridging is discovering new relationships among categories not previously noted or understood. Surfacing, as the name implies, accounted for the emergence of new categories.

Table 6 provides an example of the coding and analysis process within a case (Tarik) and cohort (Intermediate). It represents an interview with Tarik's mother. The table displays how phrases during an interview were transcribed and coded. Column 1 lists the exact words or phrases by Tarik's mother. In column 2 the researcher has given these words an initial interpretation as part of the open coding process. Column 3 designates the category resulting from the open-coding process. And in column 4, a broad theme is generated from collapsing the categories.

Once the categories were defined and the examples within each of the categories were felt to be representative, the categories were collapsed into themes for clarity and parsimony, especially as they related to the research questions; first within case, then within cohort, and then as an overall theme across cohorts. Each theme was then analyzed for its particular nature and importance within the three developmental stages suggested.

Table 6

Sample of Coding Procedure

Phrase	Open-coding	Category	Theme
"If he becomes a doctor fine."	Mother has career goals for son but is willing to support his music.	Dreams vs. realities	Obstacle
"He could also be a musician."		Awareness of interests	Family support
"He has a love for classical music."	Mother aware of son's interests	Interest	Flow
"Well, not really, because I play all types of music at home."	Student tries to expose family to music suggests the importance of music in the home	Interest	Personal characteristics
"We just appreciate music."		Family values	Family values

CHAPTER 3: Findings

Profiles of Talent Development

The following case descriptions will introduce the reader to a student from each cohort, providing a glimpse into different stages of progression of talent development. The young people on this journey, whether just starting in the arts or maintaining their study as adults, face numerous obstacles; find support and assistance from family, friends, and teachers; and are deeply affected by their artistic involvement. The stories are representative of the rich data upon which the cross-case findings where based.

Student Profiles

At the start of the study, Carmela (Elementary Cohort) was 11, in fifth grade and a participant in the Young Talent Program (YTP). Gloria (Intermediate Cohort) was 14, an eighth grade program graduate, and Tony (High School-Adult Cohort) was a 22-year-old professional dancer. In the 2 years of the study, Carmela moved to middle school and was making high school plans, Gloria moved into high school, and Tony continued his career.

Carmela—Elementary Cohort

Carmela's story highlights many of the obstacles facing the immigrant families in the study and the determination demonstrated by her entire family to succeed despite these challenges.

In the cramped hallway of the Martha Graham School on East 63rd Street in Manhattan, dancers of all ages squeezed past each other on the way to and from the dressing rooms. Carmela sat alone on a bench doing her homework. She left school in Queens at 2:30, got to the studio at 3:00 and did her homework until 4:00, then warmed up and got ready for class at 4:30. "Then I take my class. I come back, I pick up my stuff, pick out a book on the train, and start reviewing all the stuff. It's really hard for me."

Carmela attributed her extraordinary focus and dedication to her mother. She said,

> My mom, she's my role model. I just have to keep on going, try my best. Even though my mom is not home or anything, I still have to keep on studying and going to school and being responsible to myself. We came to this country to start a new life and to accomplish our goals, and that's what we are trying to do.

When she arrived in the Bronx from Caracas, Venezuela in second grade, Carmela was the only Venezuelan in her school. She knew little English and had trouble communicating with the other Latino (primarily Puerto Rican) students in Spanish. A quiet girl, she had few friends and missed her large family and the comfortable surroundings at home in Venezuela. She recalled, "in Venezuela we always had our whole family there, so you would feel more comfortable, so you could do anything you want. But we got here and there was only us, us four on our own."

The family moved three times in the first 3 years in New York, first to Brooklyn, where they lived when the parents split up, and then to two different apartments in Queens. After the split, Carmela's mother had to support herself and her three children. There had been no contact with the father, who was remarried and has a new family. By the time Carmela came to Queens as a fourth grader, her English was good, but she was a quiet child

and had taken her parents divorce hard. Her sister Carmen, 23, worked but her mother had to take a job as a live-in domestic in the suburbs to support Carmela and her brother Juan, 16. She came home only on weekends. During the week Carmen was in charge as the 3 lived on their own. They shared chores, cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Carmen and Juan helped Carmela with homework. They all liked to draw and would sometimes do it together.

Her mother said that dance filled a void for Carmela. Carmela had never taken a dance class in Venezuela, but was fascinated when she started watching dance on TV. Carmela recalled,

> I watched a piece by Martha Graham on Channel 13, but I didn't know it was her, it was Clytemnestra or something, I think it was that one. It was great. I was like, "Yeah, I want to do this!" I loved it. I said, "Mommy, I want to be in dancing," but we didn't know where the dance schools were at or anything.

When she came to school in Queens and auditioned for the ArtsConnection YTP, Carmela was selected for the advanced dance class. She immediately took to the discipline and hard work demanded by her dance teacher. She remembered,

> He was very strict. He wanted us to be genuine, to pay attention, to focus, to not look at something else. When you are a dancer you will get distracted. It's really hard to be a successful dancer and you have to pass through many things. When the teachers scream at you, you have to rehearse. You have to do many things so you can be successful when you grow up. When I make mistakes, I keep trying and trying until I get it right. If I don't get it right, I still try. I think it does help me in other parts of my life because now I know how not to let people tell me what to do, just do it. Just stay there focused and concentrated.

Her dancing brought her attention and made her more popular in school. "I guess it made a difference. Many people knew me then. I started having more friends. I had people greeting me, 'Hi, Carmela.' "

Her mother said that dance made her more mature and stronger and has developed her emotionally.

> Dance has given her the emotional stability that she needed. Because Carmela now, after everything that we've been through, is more peaceful. Her self esteem is greater and she is a happier child. Because she's so in tune with dance and that's all she wants to do. If it were up to her she would do it all the time, not just school time.

Carmela agrees,

> It's helped me a lot because being in dance and communicating with others is the same thing. When you dance you can communicate with other people, not because of speaking, because of what dance does with your body. It's such a beautiful thing that goes inside me when I'm dancing. I can express myself and everything. Sometimes, when I am really, really sad, I just try to make it more so, so that people feel that I am really sad—make them see me from my inside, how I feel from the inside.

As part of the YTP, Carmela's class took a series of dance classes at the Martha Graham School and other professional dance studios around New York City. After five

classes, Carmela was offered a scholarship to attend the Graham School after school and on Saturdays, signaling her progression into the emerger stage of development.

At first, her brother brought her to the studio, but that created tensions. Her mother recalls, "He (Juan) was very proud of her, but he loves sports and is into his own stuff, so he was not too crazy about taking Carmela to dance."

Carmela's talent and drive quickly moved her into more advanced preprofessional classes. She was dancing four to five times a week. The school director at the Graham School commented,

> She comes all the time. She's extraordinarily talented and very beautiful and very smart. She has the concentration, she has the flexibility. She listens very carefully. She has the coordination and the musicality. But you know, besides that, if she didn't have the personal strength and drive to do it, it wouldn't work. But she does. It's kind of a person that you know is not only choosing to dance, she dances well. And if she chooses to do anything else she would do that well, too. She has that internal drive to do everything well. And it just happens that she loves to dance. She's one of those that you just thank God somebody found her. Now she's on full scholarship and she really has the drive to do it. And I just worry about kids whose talents are never discovered because of the home situation or never having the opportunity.

After fifth grade, Carmela applied and was accepted to a magnet arts middle school in Queens. She is now considering her high school choices and a possible dance career. She said,

> I am just challenging myself to do the best I can do, to reach out to the goal that I want to be in. I want to be a dancer when I grow up. I really, really want to, you know, to go there. To do what I want to do, to just go straight to my goal and be a dancer. Say, like we go back to Venezuela, I want to be a very successful person so they can look up to me.

But Carmela understood the difficulties that lay ahead in pursuing a career in the arts. "It's very tough because my Mom doesn't have a lot of money. I don't know how to think about that. I don't know what I would do when I get to that point." Having progressed so far, and working in the demanding and rarified atmosphere of the Martha Graham School, Carmela knew what it takes to succeed, saying, "I can and I'm going to be successful. You know, we are all the same. We can't compete against other people. We just have to compete against ourselves."

Gloria—Intermediate Cohort

By the time Gloria's musical talents were identified in third grade she was already on a path towards failure. Family difficulties piled huge responsibilities on her shoulders, distracted her from school, and put her in emotional turmoil. A number of caring adults—grandmother, classroom teacher, and music teacher—helped nurture her strengths and turn negative behaviors into positive leadership and academic success.

Gloria was a large girl with a strong physical presence. Her fourth grade classmates described her as tough. Her teachers described her as a bully, with very low self-esteem and an aggressive attitude. When she started in music Gloria had already repeated third grade, was in the lowest reading group, and her teacher felt that she might need to repeat fourth grade. "I feel Gloria has potential, but her mind seems to be on other things. She has a

problem focusing attention and getting her work done." There were plenty of other things her mind may have been on. She once told a teacher that she would "probably end up becoming a drug addict like my mother."

The previous year Gloria had constantly been shuttled between her grandmother and mother, and consequently had missed significant school time. Along with her infant sister and brother, Gloria had recently moved in with her grandmother because her mother, suffering from AIDS and a stroke, was frequently hospitalized. At the time her grandmother worked more than an hour away in New Jersey, where she had a good job and was making a decent salary. She was forced to give up the job and look for work closer to home, in order to care for the children. "I couldn't turn them out could I?" she says. "They are my blood. They can't help it if their mother's no good." Gloria was very concerned about her mother and had not seen her father for several years. Even when Gloria was in school, she rarely completed her assignments, and was often hostile with her classmates.

When Gloria started the music program in third grade, her talents were immediately obvious. In complex rhythm exercises, she had the ability to maintain a rhythm accurately while keeping track of all of the other parts. She was solid and confident, but had little tolerance for students who did not pay attention. Her music teacher saw through her sometimes sullen looks and impatient behavior to her positive potential. "She could be brutal at times, but I saw an energy for leadership," he remembers. Her music teacher played a pivotal role in Gloria's transformation, helping her use her strengths and control her temper to reach a positive goal. He gave her responsibilities and leadership roles within the group, and encouraged her to achieve. Gloria enjoyed recalling one such incident. "He knows I don't like to perform solos but he tries to push me into it," she explained with a smile. "He gives me things to play while someone else is doing a solo. He probably figures that I wouldn't think that he's trying to make me solo, but I know he's doing that."

In fifth grade Gloria's academic performance improved dramatically. "She went from the bottom reading group in the fourth grade to the top in Grade five," her fourth grade teacher explained. "She seemed to feel better about herself. Somehow she got the message that she was special and a good person. I honestly don't think this would have happened if it weren't for the music program." She also began to have a group of friends for the first time in her life.

> My best friends are in music with me. When I first met Jasmine and Simone in second grade, we hated each other. Then Simone became my best friend. When we started with the ArtsConnection we just became friends, because we knew we had something in common.

As her talent developed, Gloria was placed in more demanding situations. She became part of the student performing ensemble, which performed regularly at school, in the community, and at events around the city. The highlight for Gloria was a performance at President Clinton's 1992 Inauguration. "After getting a standing ovation for our performance in Washington, DC, I really began to think of myself as a musician. We even had a press conference. That was really fun. It made us feel like we were real famous."

Gloria, along with several other of the advanced students, began to perform professionally with their teacher as part of a semi-professional adult/student ensemble. The members of the group voted Gloria as the treasurer to be in charge of the money they made for performing. These funds paid for the repair of instruments, costumes, transportation, and other expenses. The other students and parents saw Gloria as the most responsible student member of the group. Her grades continued to improve during intermediate school,

where she was placed in the top academic classes. She was consistently on the academic honor roll and was graduated valedictorian of her intermediate school class.

While involvement in music has certainly made a difference in Gloria's life, her family's support and sacrifice have played a crucial role in her turnaround. Her grandmother maintained high expectations for Gloria's academic and artistic development and constantly pushed her to improve in school. Gloria remembers her grandmother's edict, "You also have got to do good in school. So if you want to go to ArtsConnection, you've got to do your schoolwork, too." The family was also supportive of her music. "My sister and my brother—my grandmother—everybody likes music in my house. I remember I used to bring the instruments home to practice, they used to want to play them all the time."

Gloria now attends an arts high school in New York City. Focused and determined to go to college and become successful, this young woman knows she is talented in both music and art. Rather than focus exclusively on music, Gloria is looking for opportunities to explore all her talents and interests.

> I feel that if I go to school for music and be involved in ArtsConnection and (the performing group), that's like—it's just going to get on my nerves after a while. Music's going to become a bore. I don't want to have music all the time. I could do other things, you know. I don't only know how to play music.

Tony—High School-Adult Cohort

Many students dream of becoming a professional dancer. As the sole example of a YTP graduate working as a full-time professional dancer in a major company, Tony has fulfilled his dreams through a combination of unwavering focus from an early age, continuous support and sacrifice on the part of his mother, and a rare talent that was noticed by people who could encourage him and open doors.

"They say it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it surely took *this* village to raise *this* child," says Tony's mother who, as a single parent, worked as a cook at a community center while raising seven children. As she thinks back on the development of her youngest son, Tony, now 26, a member of the internationally renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, she says,

> Out of the hundreds, literally hundreds of people that helped, if just one wasn't there, I think maybe Tony wouldn't be here. You know, because each role they played was very important. If you eliminate just one of them, he might not have come this far.

When Tony started dance as a second grader in East Harlem, neither he nor his mother had ever heard of Alvin Ailey. He was the only member of the family who was interested in pursuing the arts.

ArtsConnection's YTP came to Tony's school in 1978, when Tony was 7. He auditioned and was selected for the YTP. At that time, in the early stages of the program, all classes were held at the Alvin Ailey Theater. "I really didn't know what was going on," Tony remembered. "I just knew it was dance, and it was movement, and I wanted to audition. I really didn't know what I was getting into, it was just a lot of fun."

The fun turned into a drive to dance that has pushed Tony ever since. But it was never easy. When his mother signed him up for a dance class on Saturdays at a community center, it was a long distance from their home. She recalled,

> I usually took him. And that was from my house to 105th to 132nd Street and Park Avenue. No transportation, had to go all the way to Third and then walk all the way over to Park, every Saturday of the month. And it becomes a neighborhood project. I can remember calling one of my daughter's friends three blocks away, "Could you do me a favor? Could you come over here and please take Tony to dance class or we won't be able to live in here," cause he'd start throwing things and saying, "I want to go!" So he wouldn't miss it. And there were only two boys in that group.

Once he was selected for the ArtsConnection program, Tony eagerly awaited the days when he would attend his dance classes at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in midtown Manhattan. "It was something to do [and] I really enjoyed it, it was fun," Tony remembered. "It was definitely a good thing for us. Just the fact that it took us out of school and our parents paid nothing. Everything was free." At Ailey, he was taught by a faculty that included original Ailey theater members whose pictures were on giant posters in the halls. Indeed, taking classes in this professional environment made Tony feel special.

His challenges were just beginning, however. Tony's fourth grade teacher recommended removing him from the dance program because he was in danger of being held over due to his problems in math. However, the assistant principal, Miss M., recognizing Tony's talent and the opportunity he had at the Alvin Ailey Theater, intervened and arranged for a Columbia University student to tutor Tony two mornings a week in math.

His mother recalls that she was ready to take him out of the dance program if his math didn't improve. "I know he would have probably killed me. But Miss M. cared. She said, 'no, wait. Let me see what I can do because Tony is very good.' "

He persevered in an art form that was usually difficult for adolescent boys to maintain. Young men are often deterred from dancing because of peer pressure that comes from the perception that dance is a feminine activity. Pursuing dance instruction often leaves boys open to teasing. In Tony's case, however, he noted he had substantial peer support.

> I'd never been teased. I guess people saw that I really wanted to do it. I was strong, I was dedicated. They said,"Okay, he's going to be something." They never tried to put me down . . . . I just stayed positive. I'm not saying it was easy, there were times that I had doubts, but I kept going. I inspired myself to keep on going.

Tony kept dancing after graduation from elementary school. After sixth grade, ArtsConnection and the Alvin Ailey Theater offered scholarships to a few of the Young Talent students so that they could continue training at Ailey after school and on weekends. As a scholarship student, Tony attended classes 4 days a week in the demanding and competitive environment of a professional dance studio. He traveled downtown to Ailey from his intermediate school, but his mother would not let him come home alone after dark. "After work I used to have to come downtown on the bus and sit and wait in the lobby with the security man until 6. That's when I joined the parent group," she recalls.

Tony credits his mother's dedication to his talent as one of the major reasons he continued to pursue dance.

> I didn't have a lot of material things like other kids had, but I did have my mother. She wasn't a stage mother, she was just easy and she knew which direction I was going in. She's followed me and supported me as opposed to leading me to where I wanted to go.

After junior high, Tony and his mother disagreed about his high school choices. She wanted him to attend a business oriented school with a strong math and computer program. Tony wanted to go the High School of Performing Arts. After satisfying herself that Performing Arts had a strong academic program as well as dance, his mother relented. As a senior, Tony earned a National Foundation of the Arts Award, which provided a full scholarship to attend college. He did not accept, however. By high school graduation Tony was determined to pursue a career in dance performance. His mother recalls,

> We got calls from as far away as The University of Hawaii, California, Vermont. They kept calling my job. Four year scholarships. We tried to talk him into it, Tony, why, why? He says, "Because if I leave New York . . ." It's not that he just wanted to dance. He wanted to dance with the Ailey Company. Now I understand. "How about your academics? What happens if something goes wrong with your arms or your toes or your legs or whatever," I asked him. He says, "I'll teach."

Tony chose not to seek a formal higher education in dance because,

> . . . I felt that I had all the dance that I needed [in high school] and I felt if I went to college for dance it would be like starting all over again, because by then I knew what I wanted to do.

He danced his way up through the ranks and into the Ailey Repertory Ensemble, where for 3 years he had the opportunity to perform frequently, locally and around the country. He was also getting encouragement from Alvin Ailey himself.

His mother remembers that

> Alvin mentioned a lot of times that Tony was hot. One time when Tony was in a repertory group performance, he [Alvin] wrote on the program, "you must stick with it, because he will make it." That's when I thought that he's good. Because if they say he's good, they know, they definitely know.

In 1991, Tony entered the elite corps of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. "I grew up within 8 months of touring," he said of his experience. "It made me stronger. It made me become the man I am." The weekly bus rides from East Harlem to the Ailey School were far in the past as he learned to adapt to the raked stages of Europe and to maintain stamina for grueling 10 week tours. As a featured dancer for the Ailey Company, Tony now traveled all over the world.

Recently, he has begun to work with students in the communities and institutions that helped him develop his own talent and follow his dream. He has performed many local lecture-demonstrations and taught workshops for the Repertory Ensemble. "It's funny, I remember as though it were yesterday, [when] I was auditioning for a workshop at the school and now here I am . . . giving one," he reflected. Now his face was on posters along the walls of the Ailey School. He also returns to his community to talk to young dancers about his career and his influences. Tony hopes to talk to the new generation of YTP dancers about the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a dance career.

> I hope I inspire the kids. I want them to get an understanding that dance, or any art they concentrate on as a career, is a part of life. And also to have fun—not in a silly joking way, just enjoying dance, enjoying life, and learning things. It's only fun when you make it fun.

Cross-case Findings

Each student's journey is woven with a unique pattern of dreams, challenges, and hardships. While the specific details are unique to each case, qualitative analysis of information gleaned from repeated interviews, observations, and documents across cases led to the emergence of general issues and patterns. These patterns suggested tentative answers to the three research questions. The conclusions and supportive documentation drawn from the data for each question are described in the following format. First, the research question will be posed stating the major issues involved in its exploration. Then, we present two case studies that exemplify major issues and findings to give the reader a vivid context in which to view the findings. Next, we provide data supporting the findings for each cohort. Each research question will close with a developmental summary across the three cohorts.

Research Question 1: Obstacles to Talent Development

Research Question 1 examined issues that had the potential to inhibit or undermine the development of the students' artistic talents. Clearly, the same obstacles could block a child's pursuit of any talent or interest, but the arts pose some special problems that are exacerbated for families lacking available time and disposable income. Cutbacks in arts programs in both schools and community centers have made the task of finding and maintaining appropriate instruction, acquiring necessary equipment and instruments, practicing and rehearsing, and balancing family responsibilities with talent development, even more challenging. Personal, family, and peer issues combine to challenge the young artist at each step of the way. One can rarely point to a single cause when a student decides or is forced to abandon artistic talent development.

Interestingly, in the course of the interviews many situations that initially appeared to be serious obstacles were not perceived as such by students and their families. However, it was clear that a combination of these and other factors could and sometimes did derail students' progress at various stages in the process. It is thus difficult to assess the impact or power of each obstacle in each individual case. As will be seen more clearly in Research Question 2, the obstacles are often best understood in the context of the strategies and interventions used to try and overcome them.

Student Profiles

The stories of Sara and Albert represent the challenges that many of the youngsters faced in developing their artistic talents.

Sara—Elementary Cohort

Sara's family—father, mother, and two older brothers—emigrated to the United States 3 years ago from a small, rural Polish town and settled in a Brooklyn neighborhood that is a melting pot neighborhood of Latino, African, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European cultures. The family lived in a spotlessly clean two bedroom apartment with the 3 children sharing a narrow bedroom.

Sara could neither speak nor read English when she arrived and was placed in a second grade class at a school with no bilingual or ESL classes offered for Polish students. Her English improved rapidly, however, and by fourth grade she was highly fluent. Sara and her brothers began to serve as translators and interpreters for their parents who still struggled with the language. Bills, letters, and other family concerns were handled as a team.

In Poland, the arts had been very much a part of the family life, although not as part of their formal schooling. Arts instruction was pursued outside of school. Sara's father painted and played the guitar. Her mother loved to sing and listen to music. One brother (19) was a visual artist and the other brother (13) composed digital music on a pieced-together computer. Sara liked to draw cartoons. No one had noticed her talent and interest in music, however, until she participated in the Young Talent music talent identification process in fourth grade.

Sara was shocked to be selected for advanced music instruction. "I'm not a good singer," she said. The music instructors and her classroom teacher were highly impressed with her general music ability, responsiveness, and spirit. "She's the perfect example of an immigrant who is inhaling the culture," her teacher said.

Acclimatization to New York started well, but family problems intruded. After 20 years of marriage, Sara's father left, leaving mother and children to fend for themselves. With no close relatives in the country to turn to for support, Sara's mother needed to find work to keep the family sheltered, clothed, and fed. Her limited English restricted her employment options and she had to take work as an office cleaner in Manhattan. The job placed her in a dilemma. It paid $14.00 per hour and came with medical coverage, but she'd have to work the evening shift—4:00 to 11:00 pm, which meant she was rarely home to spend time with her children and prepare meals. To supplement the family's income, brother Ted (21) worked a late shift job as a doorman in addition to attending school. Peter (16) was in charge of caring for Sara, checking her homework, and preparing meals. He expressed resentment at sacrificing his own extracurricular activities to run the household and take care of Sara. Though her mother was very concerned about Sara's progress in school, her work hours made it impossible for her to attend open school night. When she was able to come to school events during the day, she brought along a neighbor who spoke Polish to serve as a translator.

The family's financial circumstances and their limited English proficiency resulted in relative isolation. For a family that had reveled in the arts, they did not take advantage of any of the arts and cultural activities New York City has to offer. They knew little of the city's resources and lacked the time to engage in them. The only arts events they attended were those sponsored by ArtsConnection that occurred at the school. The family stayed in their Brooklyn community and patronized the local merchants. Sara's mother eventually saved enough money to send Sara to a Saturday program at a Polish cultural school in another section of Brooklyn to relearn her native Polish language and culture. It was most important to her that Sara not lose her connection to Poland as she became acculturated to America.

Albert—Intermediate Cohort

Albert had attended three elementary schools before he finished fourth grade. His family's moves and his own behavior problems kept him from settling in, establishing close friendships, and experiencing success in school. He lived with his mother and younger sister. An older sister lived in a juvenile detention facility and the family was not in contact with his father. His mother had steady work, but a series of serious health problems caused her to be hospitalized and miss significant work time and income. Albert's moodiness seemed to undermine his potential and kept his teachers and other caring adults at arm's length, frustrated in their attempts to help him.

When he arrived in fifth grade, some of his classmates had already been identified for advanced music instruction as part of the YTP. Whenever he could, Albert sneaked into the auditorium to watch and listen to the music classes. When it was time for his whole class to attend music, Albert's talent and interest were immediately obvious. He had learned

to play drums in the basement of his church and practiced on his own. After two classes and with the support of his classroom teacher, Albert joined the advanced music class and took class twice a week during the school day and after school.

The after-school classes presented a problem because Albert did not live close to the school and his mother was not available to pick him up because she worked in another part of the city. She was uncomfortable with him traveling home alone because of youth gangs and undesirable adults on the street in their neighborhood. Fortunately, ArtsConnection's parent liaison was able to insure that he would be accompanied home so that his mother would allow him to continue in the program.

Albert quickly became a key member of the music group, which was developing into a strong percussion ensemble. His talent and energy were a spark that was widely noticed both inside and outside of school. In a series of special workshops organized for the advanced group, noted jazz musicians Joe Chambers, Donald Byrd, Max Roach, and Wynton Marsalis all singled out Albert for his natural talent and improvisational skills. His music teacher, a male, African-American jazz percussionist, became a very influential person and role model. While Albert still exhibited occasional drastic mood swings and disruptive behavior, characterized by acting out followed by sulking, the firm intervention of his music teacher helped him get over his outbursts and rejoin the music group. Albert says, "It's great to have a mentor—somebody to just stay by you. So in case like you mess up, you don't just leave and go home and pack up. They'll tell you, keep trying till you get it right." In sixth grade his teachers marveled at his change in attitude and behavior in school and improvement in the classroom. They credited his music as the source of his turnaround.

After graduation from elementary school, Albert attended a local intermediate school and attended music classes offered at ArtsConnection on Saturdays. For a time things went well. However, the family was forced to move again due to his mother's employment situation and the desire to live in a safer neighborhood. Albert was separated from his peer group and school support. His grades began to drop and his school behavior worsened. As a result, the school initially denied him entrance into their music program. When he was finally allowed to participate, he found the music boring and the music teacher thought that he was too advanced for the group so he was removed. His mother could neither afford to pay for lessons nor buy him percussion instruments so that he could practice. When ArtsConnection was forced by budget cuts to discontinue the Saturday morning music program, Albert had no more instruction or access to instruments. As a result, he was not ready to audition for the magnet arts high school when it came time for him to apply. When he failed to be accepted, he entered a high school with no music program. At the same time his mother became ill and was confined to bed for months. Limited funds during this time made it impossible for Albert to pursue his music. "I feel lost without an instrument in my hands," he lamented. "Hopefully, [his music teacher] will arrange for us to get together and perform somewhere soon," he continued. The final blow occurred when his uncle, a mentor and only male family member, was killed violently in a drive-by shooting.

The ArtsConnection staff, sensing the desperate situation facing Albert, arranged some opportunities for him to pursue his music, but he didn't take advantage of them. He lost hope and talked about getting a part-time job now that he was 16 and had working papers. Limited financial resources, the family's need for a safer environment, poor school performance, lack of appropriate and affordable talent development opportunities, and no peer support group all plagued the pursuit of music for Albert. He is not sure if he wants to pursue a career in music, but he is sure it will always play an important role in his life. "It plays a role in being what I am—being a good person, being focused and staying in what I have to do," he says.

The Obstacles

Four factors emerged as the primary obstacles to talent development: a) family circumstances, b) lack of affordable or appropriate instructional opportunities, c) peer resentment and social stigma, and d) the conflict between personal dreams and practical realities. All of these factors are, of course, highly interrelated. The lack of financial resources contributes to all of the obstacles, but poverty alone cannot be blamed for the potential roadblocks students encounter. The picture is complex and the factors change as students move through the stages of development from elementary school through adulthood and from novice to expert. Figure 1 outlines the major obstacles encountered.

Family Circumstances

Family circumstances encompass a range of interconnected issues—finances, composition of the family unit, child care, parental support, concern for safety, and the physical environment inside and outside of the home.

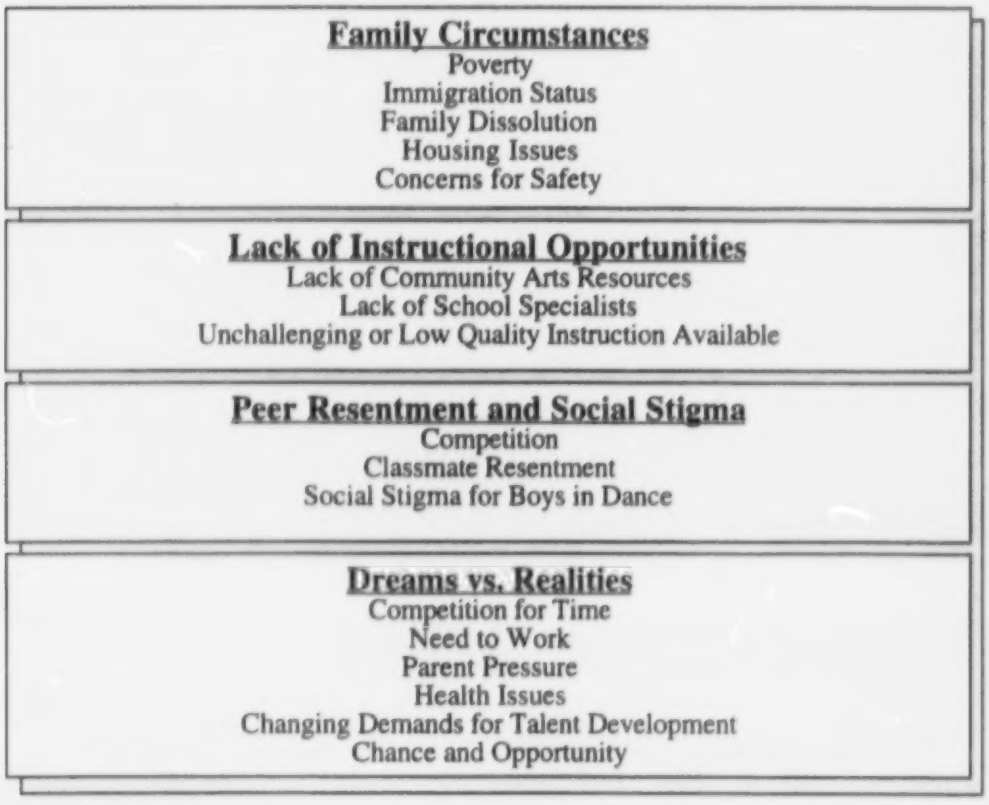

Figure 1. Obstacles to talent development.

Immigrant Status

Immigrant status exacerbated all of the above issues. Four of the 11 families in the Elementary Cohort were new immigrants, residing in the United States for less than 5 years. In that time, all of the immigrant parents had either divorced or separated, leaving the children in the custody of their mothers. This dissolution placed each household in emotional and financial turmoil and had a direct effect on the students' ability to pursue talent development opportunities. Fernando's mother was an educator in the Dominican Republic, but could only secure work as a home attendant in her neighborhood because she did not speak English. Sara's mother worked as an office cleaner, a job where English was barely required, though she was considered very intelligent in her native Poland. Carmela's mother had to take a job as a live-in domestic and was separated from her family. Parents had to rely heavily on the children to serve as translators and interpreters for school, business, and medical concerns. The children's role in the life and survival of their families placed limitations on their free time and added adult responsibilities to their young lives.

Despite the fact that the arts were reported to be highly important in the family culture of all the immigrant families, they found it financially difficult or impossible to continue talent development classes on their own without the free ArtsConnection program. The only arts events the families reported attending were those sponsored by ArtsConnection.

Family Responsibilities

Most of the students in all three cohorts helped with child care after school on a regular basis. Many of the elementary school students with younger siblings in the same school were expected to first escort their siblings home and then return to school when they had after-school arts classes.

All of the students in the Elementary and Intermediate Cohorts had regular jobs in the home that included babysitting, cleaning, taking care of pets, and helping parents or other family members with shopping. They were not given fewer responsibilities or excused from their jobs due to their arts instruction or need for practice time. While these responsibilities certainly cut into their available practice and free time, both students and parents felt that important habits and values were learned through carrying out these responsibilities.

Housing Issues

As students develop in dance or music, they need dancewear, instruments, space, and a quiet time to practice. David voiced his frustration with his attempts to practice, "With all those people living in my house, there is no time when somebody doesn't want peace and quiet. I end up being sent to the basement." Since the rest of the students live in multifamily dwellings, consideration of neighbors also restricts practice opportunities. None of the students has percussion instruments of his/her own so they practice on tabletops or with drum pads supplied by their music teacher.

Concern for Safety

Safety was of primary concern for the parents of the Elementary and Intermediate Cohorts. Six of the 11 parents in the Elementary Cohort mentioned neighborhood safety as a severe obstacle to talent development, even as it applied to after-school classes at their own school. It should be pointed out that these schools are not in neighborhoods with the city's worst crime statistics. Nonetheless, parents didn't want their children to walk home alone from after-school activities because of worries about the nefarious activities of the "street," as well as the danger of crossing busy intersections.

Shavon's father refused to have her participate in the after-school tutoring program one year because she had to walk home alone after school. He stated, "The kids today, they're not smart enough or bright enough to know when they should fear for their lives. I make her watch the news in the morning so she can hear about [for example] little Yvelis that got killed." He cautioned, "Though it's bad news, be aware of what's going on around you." When considering the safety of a child, he said, "If that doesn't affect a parent's decision, then there's something wrong with the way they think. I told her it's not that I don't trust her. I don't trust the people out there that I don't know."

The parents' need to protect their children was often paramount in their decision making. For Anna's father, the distance from her school to his job factored into his safety concerns. "It's 45 minutes to an hour to come down [to the school]. I would get very nervous because I'm so far away, anything could happen." Anna's age (10) and immaturity were also issues for him. "My daughter is the wandering type. Something will catch her attention and she's gone. All it takes is 3 minutes, [if] you're not paying attention." Two of the families expressed a desire to move out of the state and into safer neighborhoods in Florida and New Jersey.

Parents were also concerned about children arriving home to an empty apartment, because they felt that their children were not mature enough to deal with emergencies that could occur. While travel home was an issue on normal days, it seemed to be more difficult for parents to make special arrangements for their child's travel home at 4:30, after the arts class, than at 3:00 when all the other students were going home.

After elementary school, safety issues become even more complex. While students were older and more able to travel on their own, they were even more at risk for serious problems at this stage. The intermediate schools they attended were farther from their homes, and some traveled long distances to go to school. Parents were reluctant to let their teenagers use public transportation alone and were vehement about not allowing the students to hang out on the streets.

Jasmine's mother said her children "hang in," not out. As Simone's mother pointed out,

> I don't let my children out alone. There's too much going on. I really feel bad because when I was growing up I was able to go out and play because there wasn't going on the neighborhood what's going on now. It's a bad neighborhood. You hear gunshots and you don't know. I have a friend who lost all three of her sons who were killed on the streets.

David's mother wouldn't let him out either. "Maybe I'm overprotective but with gangs, drug dealers, and police harassment of African-American boys, I'm keeping David in." David's mother's day began at 4:30 a.m. when she awoke. She and David left the house by 5:30 so she could drive him to a private school on the outskirts of the city on her way to work on Long Island. "The trip is an hour and a half. I have to be at work at 7:00 so I drop him off on my way and pick him up on my return. We are usually home by 5:00." Because these youngsters were basically confined to home, opportunities to pursue talent development activities depended on families finding a safe way for them to attend.

Safety was not mentioned as a limiting factor to talent development for the High School-Adult Cohort because students were more independent and could travel alone using public transportation.

In most cases, despite the above mentioned hardships, the families provided solid support of and interest in their children's school activities. Bobby's family did not. This exceptionally talented dancer lived with his mother, adult brother, sister, and infant niece. The school's investigation into his excessive absence and occasional unkempt appearance (grounds for neglect) uncovered that his mother frequently allowed him to stay home at his will. Most of the time she claimed he was too sick to attend school, but there were rarely doctor's notes or evidence from a hospital or clinic to support that claim. His absence and illness prevented him from using a full summer scholarship to the Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH), personally bestowed upon him by its founder Arthur Mitchell. His dance teacher explained:

> When it came to DTH, they (Bobby's family) started making excuses for him not going. One of the excuses was that they did not know if they could get him the things that were required for class. When I informed them that DTH was willing to work with them (financially), then suddenly he was sick and wasn't able to go.

Bobby's teachers all said he was quite capable of doing better work, but poor attendance put him in the position of always playing "catch up" for lessons he missed. His fifth grade teacher, voicing concern over Bobby's fate, commented, ". . . this savvy manipulator could easily become a con man . . . [and] there's limited work for short dancers with no skills."

Lack of Affordable or Appropriate Opportunities for Talent Development

ArtsConnection works in schools that tend to be deficient in arts programs and are located in communities that are underserved by cultural institutions. Even in neighborhoods where affordable and appropriate opportunities do exist, limited financial resources or lack of awareness regarding such programs often keep students from participating. When students are graduated from the YTP at the end of elementary school, they are responsible for maintaining talent development on their own. In the East Harlem, South Bronx, and Brooklyn neighborhoods in which YTP schools are located, many free or low-cost arts programs in churches, boys and girls clubs, YMCAs, and settlement houses have been cut back or reconfigured as social service programs in recent years.

Private and small group lessons tend to be prohibitively expensive. Difficulties in travel and lack of adult supervision to accompany students to lessons make other classes inconvenient. In the Intermediate Cohort, only David's family had the means to provide outside music lessons. Simone's mother explained,

> Without the ArtsConnection program, Simone would not have developed any of these talents. All the children in the program were blessed that this program came along. I could never afford to give her this kind of lesson. It would have cost me a fortune.

Instructional opportunities in school are also limited. Instruction that is appropriately challenging and interesting for talented students with prior training is rare. Only a few specialized magnet arts schools exist in New York City. These schools require an application process, and entrance is often dependent on demographic information or lottery, rather than talent. Some of these specialized schools have a very strictly defined curriculum and approach to the arts. For the Young Talent music students, whose primary training was in percussion in an improvisational style, the more traditional approaches they found in their junior high schools were not appealing. While they had played classical pieces of music, they did not start by learning notation and have learned most of their repertoire by ear rather than reading music. Both Albert and Simone were encouraged to try different instruments in their school music program. Simone reports that her school music

teacher did not believe that she could play all the instruments she claimed. Albert's teacher told him he was too advanced for the junior high school band and didn't allow him to join. Jasmine, uninterested in the style of music offered, decided to try other art forms in junior and senior high school.

Likewise some of the dance students who were most interested in jazz, African, or contemporary modern dance found the ballet and Martha Graham technique favored by schools, such as the LaGuardia High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, stifling. Randall auditioned for LaGuardia, but was not accepted. He instead entered a vocational high school that offered a performing arts track (though he found the curriculum less rigorous than the YTP of his elementary years). Angela, too, chose a vocational high school and enrolled in ArtsConnection's Alumni Program throughout those years.

Peer Resentment and Social Stigma

For many in the Elementary Cohort, participation in the YTP was the fruition of a long awaited goal. Most were aware of the program in their school and eagerly anticipated their fourth grade placement auditions. Anna and Yvelis had an older sister and uncle, respectively, who were former YTP members. Although all fourth graders participated in the audition process each year, students selected for participation in the advanced core group were inevitably envied by some of their classmates who were not chosen. This jealousy and ostracization from peers had the potential to lead to discouragement and abandonment of talent development.

Of his friends who were not part of the YTP, Andrew said, ". . . they treat me good except for Jamey. He used to say, 'You sweatin' ArtsConnection' (slang for displaying pomposity), but fortunately I could beat him up so he ain't say it," Andrew confidently boasted. "Now," Andrew added, "*he's* in ArtsConnection and I said, 'So who's sweatin' now?' "

Sara and her family commented on the jealousy that goes on in and out of school. "One of my friends always say[s], 'Oh, I want to be in ArtsConnection, why can't I be in ArtsConnection? You don't know anything, why are you in ArtsConnection?' " Sara responded, "I don't know, maybe I have a talent. I can't do anything about that." Her brother added that if the resentment evolved into a physical confrontation the parents would try to resolve it. But their mother quickly interjected, ". . . and it's not only the children [that] are jealous of each other, the parents are, too!" Sara's mother remembered her surprise when another Polish immigrant, from more affluent circumstances, expressed resentment over Sara's selection for the advanced music group, saying, "My daughter wants to go to ArtsConnection and they took your daughter instead of mine." Sara's mother struggled in halting English to relate the irony." She has everything . . . mother . . . father . . . Sara, no father, understand?"

Sometimes peer resentment emanated from within the YTP Advanced Core group. Carmela said that because she excelled in dance class she was often placed at center stage, the coveted spot for a performer, leaving her dancemates to ask, "Why does she always have to be in the front?" "But what can I do about it?" Carmela lamented. "We're all the same. We can't compete against other people, you just have to compete against yourself," she concluded.

For Bobby, resentment came from his older sister as well as his classmates. "My daughter, she gets jealous of him," Bobby's mother explained. His sister was jealous both of his talent and the time their mother spent with him. His mother continued, "She'd say: 'Wow, he can do everything and I can't do anything.' " "She used to dance better than me," Bobby said of his sister, "but she didn't pursue it." Bobby's fifth grade teacher said his

classmates resented his participation in the YTP, not because they were envious of his talent, but because he was allowed to attend dance class despite excessive absence from school.

Like their counterparts in the elementary group, members of the High School-Adult Cohort recalled instances when peers were envious and/or nonsupportive of their participation in the YTP. Both Tawana and Serita experienced peer resentment during their elementary years in the YTP. "When we were in public school, the girls would get jealous of me and my friends. They'd say; 'You shouldn't be in this [YTP] you should be on the basketball team with us or on the double-dutch team with us,' " Tawana remembered.

Because of her parents' efforts to obtain a better public education for her, Serita felt the resentment of the neighborhood children. "They would think we were so different [that] they wouldn't talk to us." She complained to her mother,

> Mom, I'm so mad at you, why do you make me go all the way over there to go to school? I have no friends around the block. My friends think I'm too good for them or something. They hate me.

Due, in part, to new program components involving the entire school, introduced as part of the Javits program in 1990, the Intermediate Cohort did not seem to face the same level of resentment expressed by some of the other cohorts. During the Javits program, all fourth through sixth grade classes in the school participated in a series of music or dance classes each year and the entire school attended monthly professional performances in the auditorium. As a result of increased appreciation for music and musical talent, the Intermediate Cohort felt respect and support from their classmates. However, when they entered middle school, peer acceptance was more contingent upon conformity. Simone faced constant harassment from her schoolmates for achieving. They not only resented her high academic achievement, but also teased her about showing off as a musician. "Who do you think you are—better than us because you do gigs?"

Jasmine, too, decided to be secretive about her musical ability. "You can never tell who will be supportive or who will 'catch the attitude' that, you know, she thinks she's more special and stuff like that." David has chosen not to pursue music in school even though there was a jazz band.

> I don't want the kids to think I can only do music. It's like once they know about my music they say, 'Oh, he's a musician,' that's all they know me as. That's why I like to strive more in my work so they can recognize me as something more than a musician.

Others didn't continue to show off their percussion skills because they didn't want to appear better than the other students in the music classes at school. Indeed, for several of the students in this cohort, performing and developing their talent was reserved for the performing group where they all fit in and respected each others' talents.

Boys who enjoy dance often face the additional obstacle of social stigma from their peers and occasionally from parents or other adults as well. In most schools, this factor does not emerge full force until fifth grade, about age 10 or 11. Before that time, many boys are aware that dance is considered a primarily feminine pursuit, but it does not seem to bother them or cause them to be less enthusiastic. One sixth grader who was still in the program recalled, "When I was in fourth grade, I felt happy (dancing) because I wanted to do it. But as I got older I started changing and this might not work out for me. Sometimes I got bored and stuff." After fifth grade, comments such as "sissy" or "faggot" are common and many boys discontinued talent development in dance as a result.

Cultural heritage and traditions play a major role in the perception of dance as a non-masculine form of expression. These cultural threads are highly complex, however, and cannot be generalized to explain either involvement or resistance to dance on the part of individual students. In many Latino cultures, for example, it is common for men to dance. Social dances, from meringue to salsa to flamenco, regularly feature adult and adolescent males.

Fernando was frequently teased for being a dancer. The young boy from the Dominican Republic reported that he practiced salsa and meringue at home. "Who do you think you are because you got dance?" some of his schoolmates would ask. "Too bad it's not you," was his reply.

> I just say, "I'm myself" . . . when they push me I just walk away. But when they start hitting, I tell the teacher . . . if they start a problem, I start it, too. I don't like to start problems. I just want to be happy,

the 11 year old added with defiance.

Some fathers and other adult role models, however, communicated stereotyped "macho" perceptions of appropriate male roles that can have a devastating effect. While it was rare for a boy to admit that he was discouraged from dancing by his father, further investigation has shown this attitude to be a factor in a number of cases of boys leaving the dance program.

Negative perceptions about dance on the part of African-American males is also strong. Street dances such as break and hip-hop are primarily performed by boys and gain a level of respect, but formal study of other dance styles is still rare. The increase in dance on television through music videos on MTV has affected the viewing habits of boys, but has not seemed to significantly change their perception of personal participation. Images of Black males as tough, emotionally unexpressive, and detached are far more prevalent in the culture than those that focus on artistic or creative accomplishments (Majors & Billson, 1992).

Overall, approximately equal numbers of boys and girls were selected to start the advanced dance program in fourth grade. The attrition rate in dance tended to be higher for boys than for girls, with the biggest increase occurring between fifth and sixth grades. In some schools there was a 75% decrease in boys participating in dance between fourth and sixth grade. In many dance programs there are no boys at all, so even a small number could be considered a highly positive result. Anecdotal data from the ArtsConnection program staff suggest that a minimum critical number of boys was necessary in a class to maintain involvement. That critical number seemed to be about four. Four boys seemed to be able to withstand most outside peer pressure by membership in their own peer group. When the number fell below four, it was common for all of the boys to quit the dance program within a short period of time. The factors involved in withstanding negative peer pressure will be discussed further in Research Question 2.

Personal Dreams Versus Practical Realities

This factor was found most strikingly in the High School-Adult Cohort, becoming an issue only at some point during or just after high school when students began to think more seriously about their futures. The Elementary and Intermediate Cohorts typically fell into two categories—those who said they wanted to pursue an arts career, and those who wanted to make a good living and knew that the arts are an unlikely source of financial reward. The alternate fantasy and realism of students at different stages of talent

development was often transitory. At novice and emerger stages, they were not faced with the more difficult choices they would encounter if they continued to study and saw the glimmer of potential for further development and a possible career. For late adolescents and young adults thinking about college, a job, or starting a family, continued training required a different level of commitment. Talent development was no longer free and easily accessible in school. It required money and time, and often required students to travel beyond their own communities to find opportunities to train and perform.

A student who is serious about a performing career must devote many hours per week to training. This dedication limited social and extracurricular activities and signaled to parents and friends that the student was indeed serious about pursuing an arts career. The extensive time spent in the studio meant reduced time for outside jobs and limited extra income. Classes, bus fare, instruments, and attire were significant additional expenses. The high school and adult artists had to become adept at juggling time and money. For students who have grown up with little discretionary income, this juggling act may have seemed completely natural. While the high school and adult artists in this study commented on how busy they were and how little time they have for themselves, they did not see themselves as unusual or particularly noteworthy for their ability to continue their training. It was simply a choice they made and did not appear to them to be a large obstacle.

For some, the parents and students were at odds as to which way they should prepare for their adult lives and what role talent development would and should play in that preparation. In Andrea's case, for example, she decided to attend college as a dance and drama studies major after attending the YTP and a performing arts middle and high school. Her father hoped she would pursue a career that offered more financial security. As Andrea recalls,

> My father said, "Oh, it's the young thing to do, go to dance class and this and that, and now it's time to get serious." I was in college and he was asking how my computer classes were going, and I said, "What are you talking about? I'm a dancer, don't you realize that by now? Like, this is my job." And he was like; "So how's the psychology [class] going?"

Some parents were supportive of a potential career as a performing artist. Serita's mother, for instance, was disappointed at first that an injury kept Serita from auditioning for a dance company upon graduation from a magnet arts school. Instead, Serita decided to blend her interest in psychology and dance and attend college as a dance therapy major. For her mother it seemed that dance was an acceptable profession only "if I'm a dance therapist or in a big company. If I'm just dancing and not making that much money, it's more like a hobby than a profession [to her]," Serita observed. Her divorced parents' differing viewpoints made Serita's decisions more difficult. As she explained, "My mother, she's more strict on making a living. My father's more relaxed, saying 'Well, whatever you want to do if it makes you happy, do it.' "

There was no doubt that upon graduation Angela would go to college, but its locale caused dissension. The accessibility of dance classes was one reason Angela preferred to attend a local college. "My family really wants me to go away. They say, 'You're the first one in the family to go away to college.' " My aunt went to college but she didn't go away. Angela did not want to risk going to an unfamiliar town and discontinuing her talent development. She felt by remaining in New York City with its abundance of studios, she would more likely continue dancing. She also felt the need to be an anchor in New York for her siblings who had been sent away to live with relatives after the death of her mother.

The demands of the art form can also inhibit continued training. The physical demands on the body and vulnerability to injury can dissuade even the most committed dancer from pursuing dance as a career. Serita decided to study dance therapy because she'd injured her hip and found it too painful to pursue a performing career. She also objected to the competitiveness of the profession.

> To me, it's just too many people trying to be better than you, or trying not always to be positive. That kind of thing just stresses me out. It's okay for once in a while to get that adrenaline going when I'm going to perform, but I can't take it.

The selective audition process that parlays elementary and professional artists alike into opportunities and employment, brings with it criticism, rejection, and discrimination. Andrea spoke of the prejudices and adversities she encountered as a young dancer and as an adult professional.

> I got teased. My life is definitely nontypical. I'm Latina, I'm Puerto Rican. Discrimination for me was different and it continues to be so because I'm not either/or. I don't want to just say I'm not Black or White because it's beyond that. There should be no category although I've always fallen in with Black/Latino—and it continues to be so. But when I'm in a situation where I'm being judged as a book by its cover, it's difficult. I've always been different. I come from the ghetto, but with education and a lot of love. I've struggled and seen and dealt with a lot of stuff.

Dance also presents additional potential obstacles concerning body image and social stigma. Randall said that the required attire of tights and leotard made him reconsider continuing dance beyond the YTP. "I guess you could say that's when I started to lose it—lose the love for dance, just because of the attire." Throughout his YTP years he'd worn a t-shirt and sweat pants, but when his ballet classes at the Alvin Ailey Dance Center required tights, Randall waged battles with his mother and teachers over the leggings. "I tried everything" to con the teachers, he recalled. "I'd put my sweat pants over my tights and tell the teacher I'm just wearing them until I warmed up. I'd end up wearing them throughout the class."

Tawana had been overweight most of her life, yet it was her positive self-image that allowed her to venture on stage and perform. "As she's grown, her body hasn't slimmed at all and it's got to be difficult for her to do things that she's demanding of it, "noted her elementary and alumni dance teacher. "But she hasn't let it stop her. I think that's what impressed me a lot . . . she never has, even as a fifth grader." These high school or adult artists cited students' strong self-confidence and passion for their art as vital in overcoming the taunts and ridicule of others, especially peers.

Developmental Summary

A comparison of each cohort across stages of development revealed that the obstacles changed significantly in type and magnitude depending on both the age and stage of development of the students. One of the most difficult obstacles involved in talent development in the arts is the suddenness and discontinuity of the transitions between stages. Students progress at very different rates and they rarely have access to advice or counseling concerning their artistic development. Unlike other school subjects, there is little or no consistency or uniformity between elementary, middle, high school, and professional level arts programs in either content or method. Likewise, the demands of instruction and performance from novice to expert stages grow, not in a smooth progression, but in leaps and bounds. It is often impossible to predict if students are ready to take on the next level of challenge or commitment until they try it.

The primary obstacles changed significantly as students moved through the stages of development from elementary school through adulthood and from novice to expert. For the youngest cohort, the first major obstacle students faced was the low probability of having their artistic talents identified and developed. Family circumstances, including lack of transportation and supervision for activities outside of the school day, the need for young students to take on major household responsibilities, and parents' concerns for safety all presented major hurdles to talent development in elementary and intermediate schools. The four new immigrants (less than 5 years in the United States) faced extreme difficulties brought on by family dissolution and lack of availability of employment, housing, and social services that placed serious obstacles in the way of talent development. Except for the young male dancers in certain schools, peers were generally supportive of students in advanced instruction. While some classmates clearly envied their participation, the high status of the activity in the eyes of their peers seemed to motivate, rather than discourage, the Elementary Cohort.

As students reached intermediate school, lack of peer support and social stigma grew as obstacles. Many students felt the need to hide their artistic accomplishments from their classmates. The intermediate students also faced the problem of finding appropriately challenging and appealing instructional opportunities. Arts instruction was not available at many intermediate schools and students had to make the transition to voluntary, self-directed talent development either in or outside of school. Students who desired more serious study had two choices, a magnet school or lessons at a professional studio after school and/or on weekends. Some of the students in the Intermediate Cohort found that their training in percussion and voice, with an improvisational jazz and world music focus, did not match the requirements of the middle school music programs they sought to enter. Likewise, some of the dancers auditioning for the LaGuardia High School of the Performing and Visual Arts found that their dance interest and focus did not match the Graham technique and ballet that dominates the LaGuardia dance department. Scholarships at professional training institutions were highly competitive and often available only to older students. Individual or small group lessons were prohibitively expensive and most community-based classes were too elementary for students with prior training.

During high school, the conflict between dreams and realities became the most serious obstacle. Most had already made the decision to move towards serious study by the time they reached eighth grade, as signaled by their application to magnet arts high schools. Once in high school, students had to consider the costs and sacrifices of continuing in the arts while weighing college choices. Some parents raised concerns and challenged their commitment to continue training. At this stage, the physical and emotional demands of the field increased significantly and the young artists' decisions were highly affected by external circumstances. An injury, illness of a family member, changes in training routine, school or change in work schedule could all have an immediate and a devastating impact on their artistic aspirations. Negative peer pressure, so prevalent in the minds of the intermediate students and in the literature on adolescent development, was rarely mentioned by this cohort.

Table 7 summarizes the general changes in rank and importance of the observed obstacles between the age groups. While obstacles rarely disappeared entirely, their power and prominence shifted as other challenges became more immediate. Most notable are the increased negative peer pressure as students moved into intermediate school and the focus on economic issues and future plans in high school. Simultaneously, family factors and peer pressure decreased as students got older, became more certain of their own talents and interests, and spent more time with similarly talented friends and colleagues.

Table 7

Changes in Ranking Primary Obstacles Across Cohorts

Elementary	Intermediate	High School-Adult
• Lack of Instruction	• Peer Pressure	• Dreams vs. Realities
• Family Issues	• Lack of Instruction	• Lack of Instruction
• Peer Pressure	• Family Issues	• Peer Pressure
• Dreams vs. Realities	• Dreams vs. Realities	• Family Issues

Research Question 2: Factors Contributing to Successful Talent Development

As presented in Research Question 1, students in this study faced a series of potential obstacles in pursuing the development of their artistic talents. The Intermediate and High School-Adult Cohorts had already overcome some of those difficulties to continue their artistic development through a combination of internal resources and external interventions. Ironically, many students who had successfully overcome an obstacle did not even recognize it as a potential hindrance. It was seen as something to deal with, or even a positive influence that provided the strength and motivation to succeed.

Though these histories may illuminate some of the ingredients, influences, and stages in the process, they cannot ultimately explain *why* an individual succeeded. On this most personal journey, the link between internal characteristics and external experiences ultimately determined whether a person pursued his or her talent. Was it the demanding parent or the strength derived from defying that parent that allowed the child to practice tirelessly? Was it participation in a popular musical ensemble or the individual's need to be part of a group that spurred the student to do his or her best work? These questions can never be adequately answered. Researchers had to look constantly at the characteristics and culture of the individual and the external influences and opportunities that intervened, in the hope of capturing some of the critical interactions that moved the student towards actualizing his or her talents.

Student Profiles

David's case demonstrates the power of the extended family to support aspirations and interests, while providing values and structure to ensure economic and emotional survival. David's accomplishments in both music and the classroom are a testament to his motivation and the determination of his mother and the rest of his family to support the development of all of his talents.

For Simone, being part of the music group allowed her to gain focus in her life and build friendships that supported her social and emotional development. Music provided an outlet for her creative talents, allowing her to develop internal strength and independence, and ignore negative influences in the pursuit of her own goals. The support structures that were made available to them, along with their own drive and motivation, allowed these young people to begin to actualize their talents and follow their passion.

David—Intermediate Cohort

David lived in a modest three story house in a Brooklyn community of recent immigrants from the Caribbean, Asia, and Eastern Europe. A white picket fence lined with

flowers sets their residence off from the surrounding houses and apartment buildings. David's family came to New York from Jamaica in 1976, and the household consists of 10 people: David, his mother, sister, grandmother, uncle, aunt, and their 4 children. David's mother was employed as a nurse and worked at two jobs. Concerned about his safety as a young, African-American male, she required David to stay in the house when she was not home. He was not permitted to travel alone on public transportation. She either drove him to and from school and other special events or allowed him to travel with other trusted adults. David's grandmother provided daycare to preschool neighborhood children in the home.

When David was 8, he expressed an interest in learning to play the cello. His mother enrolled him in a special after-school program at Carnegie Hall in Manhattan. Her schedule would not allow her to accompany him to his lessons, so his grandmother put him in a cab by himself. David's cousin James, who worked at nearby Roosevelt Hospital, would leave work on his break to meet David's cab and shepherd him and his cello through the traffic on 57th Street. After his shift was over, James returned to Carnegie Hall to accompany David home on the subway. David has also studied piano, with his mother's encouragement. David remembers, "We had a piano in the house and I used to just bang it and my mother told me I should take lessons."

David's mother drove his sister Aida to voice lessons in distant Coney Island every Saturday morning in their breakdown-prone car. "Why in the world do you do that?" her brother often asked. "I have to, because that is what she loves to do," was her reply. She added that the time alone in the car with her daughter was often the only opportunity during the entire week that the two of them had to be alone together. Aida continued her music on the side as she attended law school at Williams College. Back home in Brooklyn with her law degree, she pursued a career as a vocalist and music producer. When asked what she feels about her daughter's musical aspirations, the mother responds, "as long as she has something to fall back on I support whatever she wants to do. I feel that same way about David."

David had no illusions about the practicality of music as a career. "I want to always play music," he says, "but I want to learn about business. I don't want people to think I'm only good in music. I want them to see me as smart academically also." At the same time, music was an important outlet for him.

> I'm not a formal musician, where music is my life. But I play and it makes me feel happy, and it's not structured like you've got to play this, this is where this note is going to go—it's just wherever my heart leads me, you know.

After a few years of studying cello and piano, David was identified for the ArtsConnection music program at school. With his musical background and seriousness of approach, he quickly became a key member of the group. While he continued piano lessons, it was clear that percussion and the performing ensemble had taken first place in his interests. Having the opportunity to perform music affected David more broadly.

> Performances have helped me with my presence in front of [groups]—like when I'm presenting things in school, it's like I'm not nervous. I once was nervous, but now that I'm doing all these things in front of a lot of people . . . . It doesn't make a difference.

The performing group also gave David new friends and a sense of increased belonging, as well as teaching him tolerance.

> For the rest of my life I'll be in group-type settings where I have to adjust to set-ups of different people, and I'm sure most of them I'm going to have problems with, but here [in the performing ensemble] I learn how to work and organize in a group, deal with problems. Even though it may be minor problems, I can deal with them, and I can use those tools in other venues.

After receiving a scholarship to go to a private school outside of the neighborhood, his participation in the group became his main tie to his old friends. "I got scared that I was going to be kicked out of the group because I missed some rehearsals when I had things going on at school," David recalls. Rather than feeling ostracized for being smart, going to another school, and having different interests, David was able to pursue his academic goals while keeping his connection to his friends and community through music. Moreover, his success in music gave him the confidence to pursue other goals down the road. Being successful in music "gives you a sense of determination, saying, 'If I could do this, then I'm sure I could do something else—something more difficult.' "

Simone—High School-Adult Cohort

"It's tough being a good student in my high school," says Simone, a highly determined but cheerful young woman. She predicts,

> Most of my friends from before don't know why I'm taking hard academic courses. They tease me about "acting White" and being a show-off. It makes me feel bad but I'll have the last laugh when they see me getting both a Regents diploma and a regular diploma at graduation.

It took Simone a long time to attain the confidence to respond to her peers with equanimity and perspective. She recalled,

> I used to let people upset me about how I look and my weight . . . and I was like, "why am I letting people upset me like this? It's not fair to me." So I just stopped letting them upset me. Like when they crack jokes about you and dis you, see I know how to respond now. "Oh I'm a geek and I'm a nerd, but you see, I'm going to graduate before you do so I really don't care."

Simone's fifth grade teacher reported that she used to cry when other students teased her about her weight, and she regularly got into confrontations with other students. Her parents were splitting up during that period and her test scores and grades suffered. She received low ratings in the classroom in self-confidence, leadership skills, self-motivation, and ability to work in a group. The music teachers saw none of these problems, however. The only way the school knew that anything was going on at home was because her telephone was disconnected for most of the year due to the family's financial situation after the breakup.

Simone lived with her mother and brother in an upstairs apartment in a multifamily building. Her mother was training to become a counselor to better the family's financial situation. She was very concerned about the welfare of her children growing up in the inner city. Consequently, Simone was not allowed to go out by herself or to carry money to and from school. Her mother admitted that she sheltered Simone, but explained that violence is widespread on the streets in her neighborhood. She revealed, "One of my friends has seen her three sons killed in the streets."

A practical youngster, Simone accepted this reality. She enjoyed a close relationship with her mother and appreciated her concern. Her mother insisted that Simone keep up her grades so that she could attend college. Even though Simone wanted to become a singer,

she knew that she needed to choose a career that would enable her to have a more secure life. "We have a lot of money problems—money, it's all about money." However, she believed that even if she didn't use her music talent as a professional musician, music would always play an important role in her life. She explained,

> Music is a part of me. I can't not do it! For some reason, I don't think that I could ever lose touch with music. I don't think it's ever going to leave. Even if I don't end up as a performer, I can always encourage my own children to play music. Or I could be a music teacher and encourage children to want to play music. I want to give them the feeling that I had that made me want to play music.

"Her interest in music began at 3," recalled her mother, remembering how Simone borrowed household items to make music. "She would drop hints like 'Oh, I wonder what it would be like to have a piano.' Eventually, I was able to buy her a keyboard which totally fascinated her." Simone added,

> I like to hear the notes, when they ring—I used to love to listen to them, the different sounds that they make . . . . My mom had to constantly watch me . . . . I used to run in the closet, snatch up like five pots or pans, take one of her hangers or mallets that she hits the meat with and bang! And she'd never be able to get it away from me.

When Simone was identified for advanced music instruction, her mother was thrilled. "The children were really blessed that this program came along. I could not have afforded to give Simone those kinds of lessons." Simone concurred with her mother,

> If they wouldn't have shown up I don't think that I would be doing music, because there's nothing like that around my neighborhood. I'm so glad that they came, that I'm able to share my talent with them, have fun, and play music.

Simone's vocal and instrumental talent stood out in the third grade talent identification process and then in her first full year of music instruction. Musically curious, intuitive, great ear, were evaluation comments on her fourth grade music evaluation. The music teachers noted that she loved to transpose melodies from instrument to instrument. "I don't want to do the same thing again and again. I may get bored and then turn off to music or whatever." In middle school, Simone joined the chorus and concert band where she learned to play the trumpet.

> People saw me so much and people would compliment me so much, it's like, "Maybe I should try something new—go beyond my limits." So then, the bass player, he started teaching me bass. I liked the sound. So I started playing bass—that's 2 years ago now. Xylophone, percussion—that's 4 [years ago].

She also attended the alumni classes on Saturdays at ArtsConnection and performed with the professional performing ensemble organized by her music teacher. A lively sparkle appeared in her eyes as she spoke passionately about her experience performing professionally.

> Performance makes me feel like I'm special and I can do this and this makes me feel good. This makes me feel like me. The music is a part of me. Performing with my friends and teacher in front of live audiences makes me feel like a musician. Their applause and compliments give me the courage to try harder and develop better skills.

Appearing professionally strengthened Simone's confidence in her talent.

> When I started getting compliments from people and people started applauding me and thanking me for coming to perform for them and all of a sudden people were asking me for autographs . . . . That's when I started feeling like, 'Oh, I'm a real musician now.' I feel like I'm noticed and they notice me.

In high school, Simone could pursue only one musical opportunity at a time, in accordance with school policy. As a freshman she sang in the school chorus, and planned to switch to the concert band to resume her trumpet lessons. But for both Simone and her mother, academic subjects were of primary importance.

> If one slight grade goes down, my mother's on my case forever. She won't leave me alone. It's like she'll do everything in her power to make me go mentally insane. I'm not complaining, and I'm not arguing with her.

Her music teacher/mentor was a role model for Simone, an example to which she could aspire.

> He'll sit there, he'll do all kinds of drum rolls and hit the drum all kinds of ways, make all different sounds—he makes it seem like it's so easy! And then, after time after time of him complaining and telling us to concentrate, it clicks—it's just like this: whatever he says, he clicks, just like that.

Her ongoing connection with the performing ensemble played an important role in her life, helping her stay connected with her friends in the group. She felt that her fellow musicians were her closest friends, who could be counted on to understand and support her.

> Before I was in ArtsConnection I had no real friends. I was smart in math, and the kids I played with would call me "nerd." It's like you had to act a certain way for people to like you. But in [the performing ensemble] I don't have to do that. I can be myself.

Simone's musical skills and the support of her friends and music teacher have given her a firm basis for her self confidence. She said,

> And the feeling we have between all the people, it is always going to be there. I went to school and found out I had a talent I didn't even know. I remember when I used to sing, I used to stay in a little box and you wouldn't hear me but now I sing out and I am comfortable with myself.

Both Simone and her mother were keenly aware of her special opportunities, a feeling that drove Simone to even greater achievement.

> This is like a privilege—to be in this group. To me it's like a privilege, because most kids don't get to do things like this. And I know a lot of people have talent like we do. They don't get a chance to do things like this.

For both of these students, extensive support structures, coupled with the desire to pursue their talent, enabled them to overcome potential obstacles that could have thwarted their personal development. The following section details the specific factors that contributed to the success of the students in this study.

Success Factors

Four major factors emerged as keys to the students' continued pursuit of their talent, despite the issues that may have impeded their progress: a) family support, b) instructional opportunities, c) community and school support, and d) innate personological considerations. The interaction among these factors became empowering forces that helped fuel students' talent development journeys. Figure 2 outlines the primary factors that seemed most clearly related to the success experienced by the students.

Family Support

Similar to other studies examining talent development (Albert, 1980; Bloom, 1985; Clark & Zimmerman, 1988; Csikzentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Feldman, 1986; Olszweski, Kulieke, & Buescher, 1987), support of the family was critical for these students. Many personal and financial sacrifices had to be made, not just on the part of parents, but by siblings, grandparents, and the entire extended family.

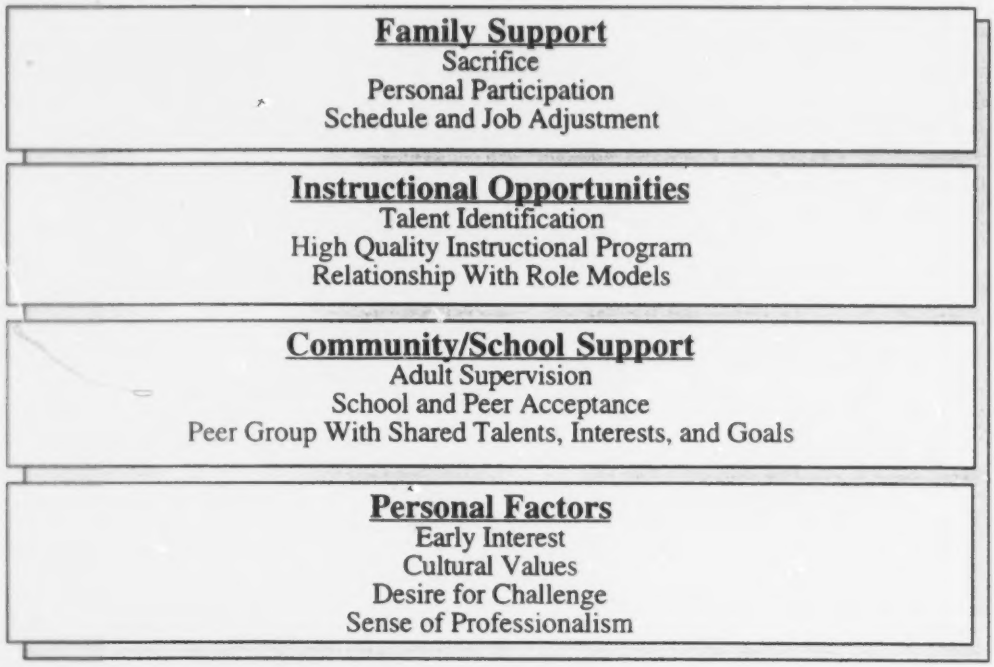

Figure 2. Summary of success factors.

Sacrifice

Yvelis and Carmela's families illustrate the lengths to which immigrant families, struggling just to provide basic needs, would go to support the development of their children's artistic talents. Yvelis and her mother were thrilled when she was finally old enough to audition and join the YTP at her predominantly bilingual school in their East Harlem community. Yet, for a brief period her mother opted to move the family of five to the less congested borough of Queens, described by Yvelis's principal as, "over the rainbow for immigrant families." However, within a few months the family returned to their former community. For Mrs. R., the cleaner streets, nicer homes, and safer neighborhood did not outweigh the quality of education previously received. She cited the lack of arts programs (such as the YTP) available to her children in the Queens school as a major reason for returning to East Harlem.

For Carmela's family, sacrifice seemed to be a constant endeavor since their emigration to the United States 5 years ago. The sudden dissolution of the nuclear family, three moves from borough to borough in 4 years, the limited work for her divorced mother, and her dying grandmother in Venezuela all compounded the situation of a family in distress. Throughout it all, Carmela's interest in dance never waned. In fact, her mother felt that dance became the key to maintaining Carmela's self-esteem when her father abandoned the family. When her grandmother died, Carmela's mother returned to Venezuela to settle the affairs. The trip lasted several months, and the burial expenses threw the family into debt. Throughout it all Mrs. G. and her children never considered returning to their homeland or interrupting Carmela's training. Her sister postponed her wedding plans and sought additional employment, while their mother worked to pay off the debt. Carmela dedicated herself and all of her performances to the women who supported and sacrificed so much on her behalf.

At times, family sacrifice extended beyond the parents to the extended family, siblings, and friends. In Sara and Carmela's cases, older brothers were responsible for babysitting and chaperoning their sisters to dance classes and rehearsals, thus limiting their own extracurricular activities. Resentment and occasional tension surfaced between the children.

Personal Participation

Families were very active in arts events offered by ArtsConnection at the schools. As one principal noted, "It has a big impact on the community. We had 110 people on family day the other morning and we are having another one and I guarantee you there will be just as many people." All of the parents mentioned the pride they experienced while observing their daughter or son in performances. The parents made complex work and child care arrangements to attend their child's performances. "I was so proud of Tarik and the others as well. When they performed at the inauguration, it filled my heart with pride. Tears welled up in my eyes," remarked Tarik's mother.

When Tarik was selected to be part of the Disney Young People's Orchestra, his mother was given a plane ticket to Los Angeles to attend the filming of the culminating performance for the Disney Channel. Tarik had the lead xylophone solo in Katchetourian's Saber Dance and his mother was determined to be there. Despite having the plane fare covered, she knew it would be difficult for her financially. Although she did not have a regular job, and the family did not even have a working telephone, she made arrangements to stay with friends and walked the 3 miles from her friend's house to the concert hall.

Simone's mother beamed as she talked about Simone's involvement with the ArtsConnection program. "I never miss a performance," she boasted. "As a matter of fact, I love going to the classes and watching the lessons. I can't wait for my little one to get into

school and be identified by the ArtsConnection." "I know my Mom is proud of me," confirmed Simone. "She makes me perform whenever her friends come over."

Daphne's mother also expressed her pride in her daughter. "I remember you played an instrument and then you got up and sang," beamed Daphne's mother, recalling the YTP concert. "Mom, *everybody* sang and played," responded Daphne in an attempt to understate her musical performance. "I understand *everybody* sung and played . . . but you should have seen *my* daughter, *she* was really good," her Mother insisted.

The principals of the YTP schools all mentioned the end of year student performances as a focal point for family involvement. One principal explains it this way:

> For a parent to see his/her child performing at such a high level, it must be an extraordinary thing. It amazes me to see the things that the children have been trained to do and their stage presence and level of professionalism that these shows have. We see more and more parents coming out for this and bringing grandma and the next door neighbor.

Schedule and Job Adjustments

In addition to the emotional support, parents made adjustments in their schedules and some changed jobs to enable their children to participate in the arts program. In some cases these were major sacrifices. Gloria's grandmother was forced to leave her relatively well-paying job to take care of Gloria, along with her baby sister and mentally retarded younger brother. She was a constant support for Gloria's musical interests.

> I just knew how important this program was for her. I know she needed me to let her go and to watch her perform. I had to find a better way to be there for Gloria. I quit my job and took in children to watch. The money is not good, but I fought the courts for welfare assistance and finally won. Now, however, I'm losing my tenants. I don't know how I will continue to make ends meet.

One parent quit his job in a Manhattan library to work as a radio car dispatcher a block away from his daughter's Brooklyn school. Many parents devised security plans for children who returned to empty apartments. April and Michele were two such latch key children. When Michele's father voiced his concern about her returning home alone at 4:30 following the after-school program, the dance instructor, a resident of the neighborhood, volunteered to escort several of her students home, thus enabling their participation. Other parents arranged for their children to stay with neighbors until they arrived home from work.

While all of the parents were highly concerned about their children's academic standing, they did not see the arts program as interfering with grades. David's mother said,

> . . . my two kids were good at academics, but the music and singing were such an important part of their lives that they couldn't function without it. I feel that it helped them express themselves and look outside of the academics and get an understanding of life.

Instructional Opportunities

A second success factor was the students' introduction to the arts in elementary school, which resulted in recognition for their talent and opportunities for rigorous ongoing arts instruction. These opportunities resulted primarily from ArtsConnection's partnership with the public schools. Such public/private partnerships are becoming increasingly important to schools as they struggle with tight budgets and changes in school population

and students' needs. The private sector is now relied on to supply some of the opportunities that schools traditionally offered to help children develop their potential (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Without a special program such as Young Talent, funded by public and private sources outside of the Board of Education, it is clear that most of these students would not have had their talents identified or nurtured. As described previously, the YTP had a variety of components. The components that seemed to contribute most to the students' success were: a) the unique multifaceted talent identification process developed by ArtsConnection, b) the talent development curriculum taught by arts professionals, c) opportunities for students to study in professional environments, and d) role models and adult supervision supplied by the program. Additionally, instruments, places to practice, and performance opportunities provided by the program were frequently mentioned as essential elements in the students' development. Students and parents alike heralded the fact that if it weren't for the ArtsConnection, there would have been no means for these students to develop their special talents.

Angela watched dance on public TV and dreamed of becoming a dancer, but never thought she would get the chance.

> So when ArtsConnection came it was easier for us to go. With ArtsConnection, if I want to, it is my choice. I had another choice. I could take classes, they didn't have to take us—it was right there during and after school. And I think that if ArtsConnection wasn't there, I wouldn't have pursued it on my own. I really don't.

To pursue arts instruction after the YTP, students had to venture beyond their neighborhoods. By middle school, three students were enrolled in magnet performing arts schools. Andrea and Randall were fortunate to have such a school housed in their elementary school building. Serita auditioned for an arts magnet school located in midtown Manhattan, far from her Brooklyn home. At the time of the study, 4 of the 6 High School-Adult Cohort either attended or were graduated from Fiorello LaGuardia High School of Music, Art and Performing Arts (3 dance majors, 1 performance studies major), an open enrollment, specialized public high school located in Manhattan.

Talent Identification

While many of the students had shown early interest in the arts, few had the opportunity for formal instruction. Lacking instruction, neither students nor their parents or teachers were aware of the extent of their talent or potential (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1996). The initial opportunity arose during the YTP identification process beginning in third and fourth grade, which involved all of the students. The process is a full class activity, not voluntary or based on teacher recommendations, as are many such selection processes in school. With the official sanction of the teacher and the school, and the participation of the whole class, students who might have been reluctant to attend an arts audition found it easy to demonstrate their talents. A principal explains,

> . . . some kids are truly very, very talented and that talent would never come out unless they were auditioned. But when you come in and audition a whole class for a specific talent, like they did for music, and you have professionals who were listening, not just a teacher, then you could pick out kids that had the talent. And a lot of those kids who were picked probably would never have been chosen. They would have been lost, never discovered, lost by the wayside.

Many of the students selected for the advanced talent development program were surprises to their teachers, parents, and sometimes even themselves. "Are you sure you have the right Jason?" one mother asked when informed of his selection. "He is so shy. I know he likes music, but I never thought he was any good at it."

Of the 24 students originally identified as talented in third grade in music in one school in 1990, 18 continued in the advanced performing ensemble through sixth grade and continued to come to Saturday classes during seventh and eighth grade. The 6 highly talented musicians in the intermediate group who now play as a professional ensemble all came from the original 24 selected from four classrooms. It is startling to imagine the talent that is being missed in schools without such a talent identification process.

The ArtsConnection talent identification process proved to be highly successful in identifying students who have the mixture of natural abilities, creativity, and motivation to succeed in advanced instruction (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1996, Oreck & Baum, 1994). As the process has been in place in the same schools for between 5 and 20 years, identified students have seen the accomplishments of the core talent groups who came before and have an immediate boost of self-esteem and motivation. Fair and systematic talent identification over a period of years thus helps create the conditions for talent development and even higher artistic achievements.

High Quality Arts Instruction

The YTP curriculum was taught by working professional artists. The artists developed their own curriculum based on their specialty and the specific needs of the students they teach. The dance program included modern, African, Afro-Caribbean, jazz, and creative dance styles. The music program concentrated on percussion and vocal instruction, using a variety of musical material from around the world. While the specifics of the curriculum were different in each school, all of the dance programs shared a basic framework developed by ArtsConnection that involved the development of basic skills and techniques, improvisation and composition, and performance opportunities.

As professionals, instructors were able to challenge talented students and maintain the respect of the students as they progressed. A classroom teacher noted,

> You must have a professional artist coming into the school. What they bring is their commitment to the art, their own gifts, their drive to create good art, their immersion in the art world, their commitment to excellence. That gets translated to the students and to the teachers who are observing. So an artist brings something into a school that a teacher just can't maintain for 6 hours a day. The artist brings the outside in, in a way that can be really exciting and challenging and can open up worlds to students and to teachers.

One of the most important aspects in the successful development of talent, according to Bloom (1985), is the transition from a student's first teacher to the next teacher who provides greater challenges and expertise. The artist instructors in the YTP were able to provide both levels of instruction, with the nurturing attitude of a beginning teacher and the advanced skills to continue challenging the developing artists. The talented and motivated students in the program responded to the challenges in ways that other 10 to 12 year olds do not. Remembering her first dance teacher, Carmela recalled, "He was very strict. He wanted us to be genuine, to pay attention, to not look at something else. It's really hard to be a successful dancer and you have to pass through many things."

Angela said, "They pushed us when we need to . . ., but when you came back to the next class you saw you improved . . . ." Randall, speaking of his dance teacher said,

> She always challenged me. It was also fast and the girls pick it up quicker . . . so I was like the boy who picked it up the quickest so that's why I got a lot of attention. I knew I had to keep going, keep going, always push.

The students' positive response to rigorous instruction, feedback, and criticism, as well as to self-doubt and occasional failure, was essential to successful talent development.

Study in the Professional Environment

As part of the YTP, ArtsConnection provided classes for students at cultural institutions around the city. Students were bussed to the classes and received information about weekend, after school, and summer programs and scholarship opportunities. Students and their families were informed of and encouraged to attend auditions to continue their training outside of school. Over a period of years, these institutions have welcomed the YTP students and have often made special arrangements to help them, including providing chaperones and transportation. These relationships helped both the students and the cultural institutions, many of whom were anxious to expand their outreach programs, but had little access to schools and students outside of their immediate neighborhood.

When Tarik auditioned for the Disney Young People's Orchestra, he didn't read music nor did he have a prepared piece of music to play. Improvising on a full size xylophone (he had only previously played one or two octave instruments), he played 12 bars of a melody, then proceeded to solo across the full range of the xylophone, coming back to the melody precisely at the end of 12 bars. The conductor on the audition panel stopped him. "Can you do that again, please?" Tarik again established the melody and improvised freely, concluding his solo at the end of 12 bars. The conductor turned to the other panelists and said, "He could be the next Lionel Hampton." Tarik was invited to join the orchestra and received a scholarship to attend the 10 day summer camp in Los Angeles. With his natural ability and sense of music, honed through an improvisational approach, he was able to pick up quickly the classical repertoire and was chosen to play a solo.

The scholarships provided the opportunities for students to venture outside of their immediate social and physical communities and meet others. "I had more opportunities because I was in ArtsConnection," said Daphne. "If I wasn't in ArtsConnection I wouldn't have the chance to audition for Disney, and I wouldn't have had the chance to go to meet other new people."

Andrea's early dance training cultivated her interests, but it was the scholarships that sustained her training because her family could not afford the cost. "Scholarships were always great," she recalled.

> Especially at that time—dance was really expensive and it still is now. I was lucky, throughout my training I was always on a program or scholarship and my mother always encouraged it. My parents were really good about that because they couldn't—they were young parents themselves.

Angela remembers Maya, an affluent Caucasian girl she met while dancing at the Martha Graham School. "She was nice. She invited me and my family to her beach house. My mother would sit there and talk to her while we danced. That's how we met." When students performed in Martha Graham's 90th birthday celebration at the Metropolitan Opera House, Angela met Mikhail Baryshnikov.

> A lot of other girls knew who he was, but I didn't. "That's Baryshnikov!" We heard everybody whispering his name. I was standing right next to him and I turned around and just smiled and said "hi." He said "Hello." He was nice. He didn't really act uppity. We sat right next to him and kept watching him stretch. The man was standing right next to me and I didn't know who he was.

ArtsConnection helped subsidize the training for some members of the High School-Adult Cohort, including Andrea and Tony. Four times a week they attended classes at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center at a cost of approximately $1,200 per semester. Many of the Adult Cohort who have pursued arts careers said that the financial support encouraged them to audition for more training opportunities. "My first audition was for ArtsConnection," said Randall. "The second was to go to East Harlem Performing Arts School. The third was for a scholarship at Boy's Harbor. I made the scholarship there and more auditions followed that."

The experience of attending classes in the professional environment had a powerful impact on the students. They became aware of opportunities outside of their own neighborhood. They were expected to act like professionals and learn a new code of behavior that applies to the studio. They experienced the expectations and demands of the professional. As part of the classes, students had the opportunity to see others at work—older students and professionals. According to a dance instructor at the Martha Graham School,

> What is most productive is to watch the professional classes. Because after seeing the professional dancers doing those things they always want to come back and they want to try those movements. They see people with the same human body structures go for hard things, go for the jumps, and go for the balances, go for the movement that to them is very fascinating and hard.

It was in this environment that many of the students began to consider a career as a performing artist as they interacted with many professionals in their domain. After the introductory classes at the Graham School, Carmela knew she had found a home. "I just knew I wanted to be a professional dancer," she says. Her dance teacher at the Graham School thinks she has a bright future.

> You just don't know where it develops, you know. You think instinctively, you know she's that good, but you don't know where it comes from. Everything is just right. Besides her physical body, her mind is really there. She can hear everything you say and translate it into her own right away.

Relationship With Role Models

Arts instructors served as professional role models whether or not students aspired to a professional career in the arts. The instructor was seen as someone who had "made it," and was making a living through talent and creativity. Many of the students in the study said that the rigorous demands of the teaching artists challenged and motivated them to higher levels of mastery. The sense of purpose and professionalism of the artist was apparent whether the classes were held in the school gymnasium or in a professional studio. Angela remembers how impressed she was watching her YTP teacher dance.

> Sometimes when the drums were going, I guess he would get excited, too, so he would start to dance. So we were watching him. He would show us the step and go, "Full out! Full out!" Then all of a sudden he would get carried away. We would just sit there and watch him. That was fun, too, to just watch him dance. We'd sit there and say, "Oooh, we can't do it like that. I wish I could do it like that."

Over the 3 years of study in the YTP, elementary students built powerful relationships with their arts instructors. This kind of relationship has been found to be vital to talent development (Bloom, 1985; Csikzentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Feldman, 1986), especially with talented youngsters at risk (Baum, Renzulli, & Hébert, 1995; Emerick, 1992; Hébert, 1993; Richert, 1992). Meaningful relationships formed with an

adult who believes in the student's abilities can provide the emotional support needed to overcome feelings of insecurity and frustration. In all cases the, instructors were seen by students as role models and served as an inspiration to them to continue on their journey in talent development.

The artist instructors were very cognizant of the importance of their position as role model/mentor/adult friend. As a member of the dance faculty put it,

> I feel that the thing the students most need when they come into school is for someone to be interested in who they are, to be interested in what they want to do. And not just to come in and teach and go, but come in and know what they are about. I started each class with "Circle Time." They tell me their news, I tell them my news. I get news from "my father is home from jail," to "my mother had a baby," to "I went to Coney Island," all kinds of things not directly related to dance, but that create a rapport between myself and the students that I feel is a warmth that they need. It improves their work in the classroom because they know I am interested in them as individuals.

Tawana explained why she viewed her dance teacher as a role model. She remembered,

> First of all, I love to see my Black sisters and brothers talk so strongly about us. She always was talking about discipline and how if we ever wanted to be somebody or do something, we had to go in the right direction. She was always giving a positive message. I liked that.

For the Intermediate Cohort, the relationship with their music instructor was particularly important. Indeed, their teacher was more than a role model. He was a true mentor. Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington (1988) define mentor as someone who provides a supportive relationship to a youth or young adult. This person is senior in age and experience and offers support, guidance, and concrete assistance as the younger partner goes through a difficult period, enters a new area of experience, takes on an important task, or corrects an earlier problem. In general, during mentoring, the mentees identify with or form a strong interpersonal attachment to their mentors. As a result, they become able to do for themselves what their mentors have done for them. When the Intermediate Cohort students were asked about the aspects of the program they felt were most important to the development of their talent, they unanimously identified their teacher.

"We try to do our best never to let him down because he would never let us down." These words describe the unique bond students formed with their teacher. Their teacher often compared his relationship with his students to the type of apprenticeship experience that is common in the jazz world. "It's all about performance, professionalism, and complexity," he remarked when he discussed his teaching philosophy. He had extremely high expectations for these young musicians and accentuated their positive potential. As Mrs. H. explained,

> At times, he is hard on them but not in a mean way—he just wants them to be as good as you know they can be because he knows their potential. Sometimes they get a little upset with his criticism, but they respond. He's not hard on them. He works them hard, but he's not hard on them.

"He really cares about us and makes us feel special" Tarik explained. "At times he's hard on us and won't let us stop until we perform up to his high expectations. We give our supreme effort to him because he gives to us, too."

When Tarik was selected to attend the Disney Youth Orchestra, he had not yet learned to read music. His music teacher gave up his own time to give Tarik a "crash course" in sight reading. "Tarik was the only one in the orchestra who didn't read music," explained Mrs. H. "God bless him [the music teacher]. He drilled Tarik for 5 to 6 weeks so that he would be ready."

Community and School Support

The third support system came from the local community, including parents and other adults, and the school community including teachers, administrators, and schoolmates. Community members demonstrated their support through attendance at school and neighborhood performances and weekend workshops, assistance in supervision and organization of program events, and general encouragement given widely and frequently to the students throughout the neighborhood.

Support in school was critical to the students' success on many levels. The attitudes and actions of teachers and administrators about the importance of the arts and the value of students' talent development had both psychological and practical effects on the students' ability to succeed in the arts and in the classroom. Schoolmates also provided encouragement and support. Without peer acceptance, many of the students might have abandoned their talent development just to fit in and be accepted in the social context of the school and community (Maslow, 1968). Furthermore, some gifted students seem to require opportunities to interact with other gifted students to feel valued and worthy (Frey, 1991). Unfortunately, for many economically disadvantaged minority students this need is often fulfilled by gang membership (Kuykendahl, 1992).

Adult Supervision

A vital facet of the YTP was the adult supervision provided by ArtsConnection. The presence of trustworthy adults during all after and out-of-school events allowed families to feel secure permitting their children to attend the various components of the program. Each program school had a site coordinator hired by ArtsConnection. Whenever possible, the site coordinator lived in the community and in one case was a parent of a participating student. The site coordinator was present until 4:30 every day the program was in the school, as well as for all weekend and summer events.

All of the students and parents in the Elementary and Intermediate Cohorts mentioned the role that the site coordinators played in the development of their children's talent. Many of the parents said that they would not have allowed their children to participate in after-school rehearsals and special performances if there had not been a trusted adult available to supervise them and get them home safely. David's mother, who had admitted that she was somewhat overprotective, declared that "Supplying Mrs. H. (ArtsConnection site coordinator) was gorgeous. With Mrs. H. there, I can trust that my son is in good hands."

Mrs. H. was more than a chaperone to the children. She was like a second Mom to them and grew to love them all. When she spoke of them she exuded heartfelt pride.

> They are such good kids. They respect one another. They confide in me and ask me all sorts of questions. I've gotten so close to them that I have to be careful not to take the role of their parents.

Students all mentioned that they feel very close to Mrs. H. and that they can confide in her. As Simone said, "It's great having her along."

School and Peer Support

As discussed in Research Question 1, none of the schools involved in the YTP could be considered highly supportive of the arts. Due to budget cuts and space and schedule limitations, none of the schools had full time arts specialists. Teachers faced with increased pressures of testing rarely incorporated artistic activities into the curriculum and were unaware of the artistic talents of many of their students (Oreck, Baum, & Owen, 1999). Despite this lack of arts in the school curriculum and the fact that Young Talent students, many whom were struggling academically, missed 1-3 periods of class time per week for arts instruction, teachers generally expressed a high level of support for the students' participation. Teachers made special arrangements for students to make up work, encouraged students to share what they were doing with the rest of the class, and many attended performances and workshops after school hours and on weekends. It was clear, especially for the Intermediate Cohort, that the entire school shared pride in the accomplishments of the advanced students.

Likewise, students who were not selected for advanced instruction were generally supportive of their Young Talent classmates. This peer support seems to have been enhanced by the yearly involvement of everyone and the various levels of the program (performances, short-term workshops, and long-term instruction). The sense of importance surrounding the arts program and the support felt by the students for their hard work fueled their motivation and dedication.

Despite the incidents of negative peer response detailed in Research Question 1, most of the students in the study reported that they felt mostly positive support from their classmates and teachers, particularly in elementary school. The involvement of the entire school in the YTP stimulated interest and raised appreciation for the students' artistic talents on the part of peers and classroom teachers. The positive feedback and encouragement served to validate and support the students' efforts and accomplishments.

The music students commented that their classmates made them feel like celebrities and that their classroom teachers always asked them about their performances. Asked to comment about the other people most responsible for her success, Simone stated, "Last, but not least my friends. They made me feel a little bit superior because of their compliments."

Teachers, too, encouraged students to participate. Some came to see them at out of school performances. One teacher traveled to Washington, DC to see the music group perform. Research conducted through the Javits grant showed the positive effects of raised teacher expectations on the overall performance of YTP students. Teachers were looking at the students differently and respected their talent (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997). At times teachers and administrators intervened directly when students had a problem. Program components that supported students' academic progress helped allay the concerns of teachers and parents about missed class time.

As part of the YTP, ArtsConnection provided tutoring to students who were having serious academic problems. Specially trained tutors worked with small groups of students after school. They used creative arts-based techniques to help students use their artistic strengths to improve their schoolwork. Randall recalled,

> No one wants to stay after school, but [my tutor] made it interesting. She really enjoyed ArtsConnection, she was supportive. She always asked me about it. She always said how much she enjoyed the show and she bought me little things after the show. After my rehearsals, we would go to lunch together. She was a good tutor.

The academic tutoring component of the program made it possible for many students who were experiencing severe academic difficulties to continue their arts training. Without this assistance, some teachers and parents would have been more likely to remove a child from the arts program if they felt it was interfering with schoolwork or if they felt that removal would serve as an effective punishment.

Peer Group With Shared Interests, Talents, and Goals

For the talented youngsters in this study, the advanced music and dance classes provided an appropriate and natural support group. Students formed close relationships in a context where they were able to be themselves and feel accepted and valued. Participation in such a group was especially important after students left elementary school. As described previously, once students reached intermediate school, peer and school support diminished. As a result, some of students felt that they had to hide their talent to avoid appearing different or more talented than their age mates. The situation worsened when their teachers, both in the arts and other subjects, voiced disbelief about their talents. The Young Talent alumni program enabled students to maintain their support group. It was at the Saturday classes and at their performances that students felt most comfortable demonstrating their talents. Membership in the semi-professional music performing group became a major source of comfort and inspiration for the intermediates. All 6 rated participation in the group as equal to or more important than friends, school, or family. As Tarik described, "I wouldn't say [we're like] a family. It's like we are one. We would not be as close without the group. We have family bonds. We help each other, and we learn from each other."

Group identity was particularly critical for boys enrolled in the Elementary Cohort dance classes, a domain traditionally dominated by girls. YTP male dancers in all three cohorts commented that at the elementary level they found the dance classes challenging and equated its physicality and hard work with sports they enjoy. It did not matter to them whether or not the instructor was male. The idea of pursuing a dance career was just as appealing as one in sports or music. Some of the boys who participated in dance ran the risk of being ridiculed about their participation, particularly about the special attire they wore for class. Most claimed that they were not teased by peers, however, on the occasions when taunting did occur, they responded with verbal assaults or just dismissed the comments as ignorant. As the minority, the males composed an internal support system from which they could withstand peer pressure, social stigma, and other obstacles, as well as having other boys with whom to collaborate and compete.

Personal Characteristics and Motivation

The support structures described above were essential in creating the conditions which allowed students to follow their interests and proceed with their talent development. But without the student's desire or motivation to embark upon this journey, the support systems would be built on sand with no foundation. Analysis of the primary motivations for the students uncovered three major themes: a) an early interest in music or dance, b) a family who valued the arts, and c) the development of an identity as a professional. These themes are elaborated below.

Early Interest

Successful people within specific domains often show interest and potential in that domain during their early childhood years (Gardner, 1983b; Renzulli, 1995). This was the case for the students in this study. Many parents described their young children as highly responsive to music, dancing as soon as they could walk, and being fascinated by dance on TV. Tony danced on tables and chairs and entertained his family from age 3. Angela remembered,

> When I was a little girl I said, "I want to be a ballerina." I knew I didn't really want to be a ballerina, but I wanted to dance. Like a White-skinned beauty, she can be a ballerina if she wants to, but I could never be a ballerina. There was really nowhere to go. My parents don't really understand, you know, they think you will grow out of it eventually.

Students from the Intermediate Cohort uniformly showed an early interest in music. Simone banged pots and pans at 3 until her mother bought her a keyboard. At 5, Albert, while listening to a church choir, decided that if he were going to be talented in something it would be music. His mother asked a musician from church to teach Albert basic percussion skills when he was in kindergarten. Tarik composed music at 3, and David requested and received piano lessons at 5. Jasmine, too, reported that she always loved music and dance. Her parents gave her ballet lessons at 5, but she preferred music when the opportunity presented itself.

The intermediate students all recalled that they had been highly motivated to be selected for advanced instruction during the talent identification phase of the program when they were in third grade. Some of the students freely admitted that they were not normally well behaved in the academic classroom, but were on their "best behavior" during the identification process. Their eventual identification as talented validated their early interests and strong desire to be selected into the program. Indeed, all 6 intermediate students demonstrated outstanding talent and excellent behavior during the audition process.

Cultural Values and Family Background

The majority of the students from all three cohorts came from families and cultures who appreciate the arts—especially dance and music. In many cases, family members had extensive experiences in dance and music. For instance, Heather's parents were professional dancers. Sara's father painted and played the guitar; Fernando's mother played the piano; and Michele's father retained fond memories of his "basement band." Daphne, Andrew, and Tawana's musical interests and talents were cultivated in their church choirs. David's sister is a professional singer. Tarik's grandmother was a pianist. His mother took piano lessons and also danced professionally for 3 years. Gloria's uncle had performed musically. Albert's mother and sister both sing in their church choir.

No matter how meager the furnishings in some households, there was evidence of the family's love for music. David's small living room shared its space with a piano. Albert's basement apartment had little else in the living room except a shelf with a CD and tape player. At Gloria's home the stereo system, tapes, and compact discs were prominently displayed.

Sense of Professionalism Through Challenge

As students progressed, they began to see themselves as professional dancers or musicians. They displayed a growing confidence in their own abilities, especially as they mastered increasingly complex pieces and performed before a variety of audiences and with professional musicians or dancers. They seemed to thrive when challenged and set ever higher goals. Indeed, as the curriculum became more challenging they exerted more effort. Their love of performing, both for themselves and in front of an audience, further energized them to act like professional artists.

A possible result of their early artistic success was their reluctance to participate in the arts classes offered in their intermediate and high schools. Tarik said he did not want to participate in the school music program. "It was too easy," he claimed. Simone decided to learn to play different instruments, since she was bored with the level of instruction offered for the percussion section in her high school. Randall, when asked if he ever wanted to quit

dance, said, "I wanted to quit when I was in high school and the dance wasn't advanced as I thought it would be or could be. I was more advanced. I needed a challenge."

For the Elementary Cohort, a sense of professionalism developed from their opportunities to work with professional dancers and musicians and perform in front of audiences. The annual performances at school, special workshops at professional studios, guest teachers, and performances in places other than school served as powerful motivators. They thrived on the excitement such opportunities generated and the energy and responses of their audiences. These performances expanded from school assemblies to public performances at such venues as the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Apollo Theater. The music students performed in Washington, DC at President Clinton's first inauguration.

Some students were invited to perform with adults outside the realm of school. Bobby and Fernando were featured in a dance program sponsored by their ArtsConnection site coordinator, and Carmela was asked to perform with her dance teacher's professional dance company. Angela remembers performing in a celebration honoring Martha Graham at the State Theater at Lincoln Center, "Just being there, just being in the Metropolitan [Opera House] was something I never thought I would do in my entire life and to actually perform there was like big time for me." For these students, the recognition and support of their talent in a non-school setting made them feel like professionals and they, in turn, acted like professionals.

"Performing in front of an audience energizes me," explained Jasmine. "When the audience responds by clapping and cheering during a performance we play harder and better," added Simone. "When the audience compliments me about how well we did, I feel like a musician. It makes me want to try something new—go beyond my limits."

Developmental Summary

For all three cohorts, development of talent depended upon family and community support and the students' own intrinsic drive to develop their talents. As they progressed, the nature of the support began to shift from the family to more professional sources and the internal drive emerged more forcefully.

Because the obstacles varied according to the age of the students and their particular stage of talent development, the opportunities and support required to maintain talent development took on different dimensions as students progressed. All four success factors—family support, instructional opportunities, community and school support, and personological factors—were required at each stage, but the specific character and balance of the factors changed between the stages of development.

During the elementary/novice stage, students needed to have their talents identified and developed. Once offered this opportunity, family and community support became essential. Adults conveyed their belief that talent development was important and took action to make it possible for students to participate. Together with the school and outside agency, the family and community ensured that students were safe, and that they had academic support so that talent development did not interfere with schoolwork. The arts curriculum was challenging enough to motivate talented students, while allowing them to experience the success needed to build confidence and gain recognition from others.

As emerging artists in intermediate school, students needed a higher level of instruction, offering a challenging curriculum, performance opportunities, and preprofessional experiences. Relationships with arts instructors often took on the quality of mentorships at this stage. Contact with peers who shared similar interests and talents

became critical to overcome competition from other social influences. Intrinsic motivation increased as regular practice became necessary, rehearsals and classes were longer, and schoolwork and home obligations had to be juggled to accommodate the increased focus on talent development. The students' own desire to excel, along with the assistance and support of parents and other interested adults, was paramount to overcoming the potential obstacles at this stage.

The transition from intermediate to high school and emerger to expert stages is perhaps the most difficult. The decision to pursue the arts as a career or a serious lifetime study can take place at any age—during elementary, intermediate, or high school or later as an adult—but the recognition that one is driven to a life as an artist is a deeply personal and life-altering commitment. To reach an expert level, artistic study almost always must come first in one's priorities. The support of parents, teachers, and peers remained important, but the high school/adult artists had to be highly motivated to search out classes and teachers, attend auditions, maintain personal health and fitness, and maintain school, work, and family commitments.

The complex and highly individual interaction of external and internal factors influencing students' pursuit of talent development made it impossible to summarize the development changes as was done in Research Question 1.

Research Question 3: The Impact of Talent Development

The complex combination of external and internal factors described in Research Question 2 leads to the final questions: How has artistic talent development affected the students' lives? How and to what extent do the skills, competencies, habits, and strategies developed in arts instruction help students in and outside of school?

To answer these questions, the comments of students and their families, observations by arts instructors and school teachers, and evidence of personal achievements were analyzed and combined into themes in two dimensions—as psychological competencies or personal qualities, and as personal accomplishments and observable behaviors. Both categories of outcomes are seen primarily in the two older cohorts who have had more time to develop and who are more articulate in reflecting on the meaning of their experiences. The personal traits will be described first, followed by the evidence of achievements and behaviors.

Student Profiles

Angela and Randall are two students from Harlem who had had no formal dance instruction when they auditioned for the YTP in third grade. The spark that was ignited when they began dancing has had a significant role in their lives and continues as they attend local colleges and pursue dance on their own. Both faced serious challenges—Angela from family circumstances and Randall in school—that could have stopped their artistic development, but both credit the arts for giving them the strength, structure, and motivation to overcome those challenges.

Angela—High School-Adult Cohort

Angela grew up quickly. Her dance teacher described her as "an old spirit, a mature and thoughtful child, older in her mind than some of her peers." Throughout most of Angela's elementary school years, her mother suffered through a series of long illnesses. She never knew her father, and the family of five survived on public assistance in a rent subsidized high rise housing project until her mother's death when Angela was in high school. At that point she moved in with her grandmother, while her younger brother and

two sisters were sent to live with relatives in other states. Throughout her mother's illness, dance was a constant for Angela, first at her elementary school, then on Saturdays through ArtsConnection's Young Talent alumni program. She says,

> It gave me another world. You have reality and then you have Saturdays when you went and danced. Whatever dance you were doing or practicing you were creating a story so that was another outlet. It really let a lot of energy out—where, if it was negative, it turned into positive because I was able to go forget for those couple of hours and just dance and have fun. The music calms you, and then you dance, and it's just a whole other world and you were just able to escape. And for me that was always my natural high. No school. No thinking. Nothing.

With her family splintered, Angela became the link to home for her siblings. Her greatest fear was losing that connection by going away to college. "My family really wants me to go away. They say, 'You're the first one in the family to go away to college.' My aunt went to college but she didn't go away. I really don't want to go away." Angela has decided to stay in the city after graduating high school to attend City University in psychology or business management.

The Alumni Dance program and her connection with her dance teacher/mentor, whom she has known since elementary school, became a source of stability for her. Although Angela does not aspire to be a professional dancer, she can't imagine life without dance. "Dance will always be in my life. It will be in my children's life."

Her dance teacher continued to push her hard to expand expressive capabilities through dance. "I'm very rigid in giving my all," Angela admits. Her dance teacher recounts,

> She has always been a little inhibited. I was trying to make her be more comfortable with her body. I've never been able to move her to the point where I wanted her to go as a dancer but she was always pushing and has realized, "Wow, I really can go a little further."

Angela appreciates that pushing from an adult mentor saying,

> When someone pushes you and you find that you improve you learn to practice. Because you know if you practice it, you get it. So they gave us that start-off push. You didn't want to. You were tired. And then the next class, you didn't need the push anymore. You know you can do it, but for some reason it just doesn't seem to be happening fast enough. But when you actually see it physically happening, there's this one step you couldn't do when you first got there . . . right in the middle of the class and you're doing it as if you've always done it. Then you know that "if I can do this with my body, then I must be able to do this with my mind. I may not be perfect, but I am getting better." So it does help when you see it physically.

Her interest in dance started when she was young watching dance on public TV, but Angela never imagined she would have a chance to dance herself.

> No one in my family dances. No kind of dance. I don't know whether its living in the projects, children just don't think about dance class. They don't think about doing stuff like that they just don't. [Without dance] I don't know what I'd be doing right now. I really don't. My life would have been really boring. When everybody else was sitting up in the building, I was out dancing for a couple of hours.

Angela applied the focus and professionalism she experienced in dance to the rest of her life. Referring to the discipline she acquired in dance she said,

> It's about learning. You know how they teach the children Ebonics and stuff like that. With dancing, when a child does a step wrong, it was never allowed. I was always taught to try until you get this better. If you allow that child to do the step wrong, how is she ever going to learn that it's wrong? He has to learn how to do it right. And when he learns that it's right and he gets it right, he's going to feel 10 times better about himself than when he's back to doing it wrong.

Randall—High School-Adult Cohort

It was very difficult to schedule an interview with Randall. Between college classes, a part time job, dance classes, and dance company rehearsals, Randall could rarely find a quiet moment to sit and talk. The schedule only intensified on the weekends. He was studying fashion design and worked professionally on music videos as a stylist, choreographer, and dancer. The YTP was his first formal dance instruction. He credited his dance experiences with developing his talents, confidence, and drive to succeed.

> I picked up fast. I was a quick learner. I was active, energetic. I knew I was talented when I got accepted to [magnet arts middle school]. As I got older, auditions started to come a lot more often. I guess after the first audition I said, "Okay, I'm ready for the second one." The first audition was ArtsConnection, the second was [magnet arts middle school], and the next was for a scholarship at [a local arts school and dance company]. I made the scholarship and more auditions followed that.

Randall struggled academically in elementary school. He had difficulties in math and had to attend after-school tutoring to stay in the dance program. He remembered that, "I couldn't stand going there, but it helped me in the end. I was so hooked on ArtsConnection, but no one wants to stay after school longer. I just wanted to get into a dance class." Dance quickly became a driving force in his life.

> I think I knew I always loved dance because every time I was in a play and I knew we had a time to dance, that would be like my moment to shine. It played a big role. It's like ArtsConnection was always at school. So I was like, "Oh okay, if I want ArtsConnection I got to go to school."

His family was very supportive of his dancing, but there were many challenges along the way for a young man from East Harlem in dance. His mother took him to auditions and at age 12 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Alvin Ailey summer camp and at the Alvin Ailey School during the school year.

He attended a high school with a dance program, but felt that it wasn't advanced enough for him. "I wanted to quit when I was in high school. I was more advanced. I needed a challenge." After high school he worked in a semi-professional dance company that featured jazz and modern dance. His own choreography blended hip-hop and other dance styles. Randall felt that learning a variety of dance techniques was best for him.

> I think they started me off good in African. If it was ballet I probably would have flown out the window. I needed something more up tempo, something more me. I started off there and then pushed to modern, that's flowy, that's good, then on to ballet. As of last year I started to like ballet also. I've got my jumps and that is where my technique comes from. Its hard to start a person off with ballet. Now my

> concentration is a lot better. I've learned how to attack movement a lot more. I'm learning to give more attitude and personality to my dancing.

Randall saw a future that included a mixture of his artistic interests.

> I see myself in a good job or I'll be dancing. I always took all good opportunities. I had a whole lot of support. I was so blessed. I was pretty lucky I was guided in the right direction. I had a love for dance and I wasn't going to let anyone stop me. I had a mind of my own.

Randall felt that his work habits and dedication were formed through his artistic development. While his early school experiences might have put him at risk for failure, he had found a perspective on the choices he had made.

> If ArtsConnection never came into my life . . . I don't know. I'm still pretty much trying to pick out where I would be today. Like what would I be doing to kill all this empty time that I would have if I wasn't dancing.

Impact of Talent Development

Psychological Competencies and Personal Qualities

Many of the personal outcomes or effects of talent development can also be viewed as basic requirements for serious study in the arts. It seems obvious that the students' strengths and innate proclivities have led them into activities that support those strengths, so that the factors described here are both effects of artistic talent development and characteristics that have made it possible. Figure 3 illustrates the interrelationship of the four primary categories of personal qualities.

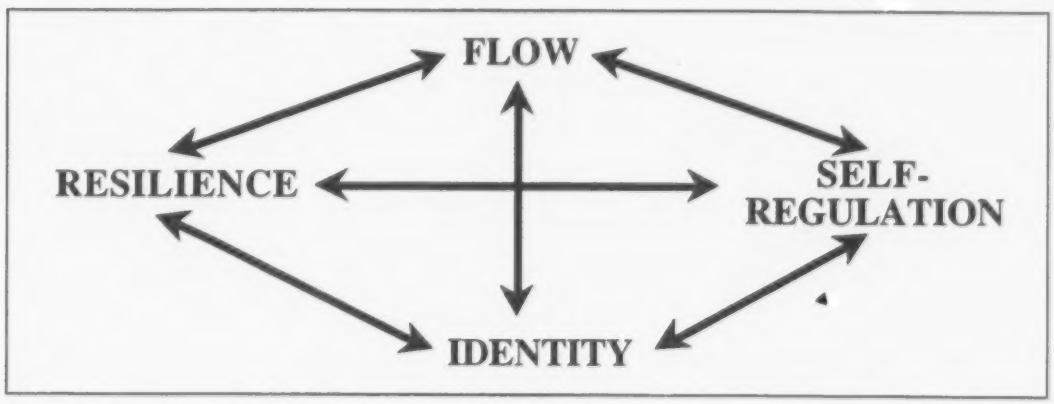

Figure 3. Summary of primary student outcomes.

Flow

Flow is a state of total absorption in an activity. Csikzentmihalyi (1990) used this term to describe the

> subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of losing track of time and of being unaware of fatigue and of everything else but the activity itself. The depth of involvement is something . . . enjoyable and intrinsically, rewarding. (1993, p. 14)

This level of consciousness directs the energies of those who experience it and has the power to distract those individuals from daily concerns or worries. In Maslow's (1968) concept of the "peak experience," people are lost in the present—completely at one with the experience. These experiences are self motivating and are responsible for people's continuous need to be involved at heightened levels of complexity.

Above all, students were committed to their art because they loved it. The flow state was enhanced through talent development and was the driving force behind their continued study and commitment. Any activity one loves can have this quality to a certain extent. But for many artists, the creative state of mind, the demanding physical exertion, and the clear goal of performing, communicating, and sharing themselves with an audience was a unique experience and for many, became the focus of daily existence. As one young adult said, "It's like I became addicted to dance."

The sense of flow was experienced in various degrees by students across all cohorts and stages of talent development. Because of the High School-Adult Cohort's age and longer period of engagement, they were very articulate when they explained how this involvement made them feel. It is at times of complete immersion that they were able to be at one with their art and understand their place in the larger world. Tony, as a professional performer, explained his feeling for dancing this way,

> Think, think dance. I don't think classroom at all—I think dance. I think that I am on the stage and I don't look in the mirror, I look beyond the mirror and I put the music right through my body and just let it settle and just let it move like water. Movement is not only a way of thinking, it is a way of understanding, you know—how, when, where.

Angela felt transported when she danced. She said, "sometimes with the beat of the drum you can't even feel your heartbeat anymore and you just hear the drum and that's what you move to."

For the intermediate group, the emotional pull of music seemed to grow stronger with each passing year. They clearly understood the value of being totally involved in something they loved to do. Jasmine said, "Everyone should have an opportunity to do something that they can really enjoy. It might be collecting cars or painting or any type of art." Simone declared her commitment to keep music in her life for the good feelings it provides.

> I will always make time for music because I have to. I can't sit there and not do any music. I could be a music teacher or do something that encourages children to . . . want to play music. I want to give them the feelings I had that make me want to play music.

Although David did not plan on becoming a professional musician, he insisted that music will remain an important part of his life. "I play and it makes me feel happy . . . it's just where my heart leads me, you know."

This awareness of the spiritual or emotional experience when engaged fully in the arts has its genesis in the novice stage. The more articulate students described poignantly how dance makes them feel, both physically and emotionally. As Carmela put it, "It's such a beautiful thing that goes on inside me when I'm dancing." Fernando concluded, "From your mind you get your ideas for modern dance and from your heart you get your movement."

Students at all stages of development felt that their sense of flow was enhanced by the experience of performing in front of an audience. At those times, students appeared so totally involved in their performance that they seemed to be consumed and unaware of the audience or the pressure of being on stage. When students in the Intermediate Cohort performed as an ensemble, audience members frequently commented that, "They seem to be in their own world; they are lost in their music; they are totally focused."

For all of the students in the study, the flow experience seemed to be the central driving force behind their commitment to talent development. The time they spent in arts classes, rehearsals, and performances appeared to give them a satisfaction unsurpassed by other pursuits and aspects of their lives. The ability of the older students to extend their flow experiences in longer classes and rehearsals does have the quality of a positive addiction.

Self-regulation

Current learning theory emphasizes the importance of self-regulation for succeeding in any endeavor. Students are self-regulated when they are aware of their own learning processes and select useful strategies to complete a task (Bandura, 1986; Zimmerman, 1989). Research has shown that when students are engaged in challenging activities that accentuate their talents, they demonstrate extraordinary ability to regulate their own learning (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997; Baum, Renzulli, & Hébert, 1995).

Students in this study were very aware of the self-regulatory behaviors they needed to use to be successful in the arts. Students in all three cohorts commented on both the specific processes and learning strategies, as well as the general habits of practice, focus, and discipline that helped them progress in demanding instruction. As students moved through the stages of talent development, they became increasingly able to apply their successful self-regulatory behaviors to other areas of their personal and academic lives. For the most part, these students were achieving in school, setting goals for their future, and assuming responsibility for their actions.

Because the pursuit of the arts was so intrinsically rewarding for these students, hard work was embraced eagerly. They acknowledged that they were pushed physically and mentally. The talent development process provided the opportunity for the students to learn their limits and test their responses to hard work. Students who excelled appreciated being challenged and pushed hard by their teacher.

Intensive involvement in an area of interest required students to develop a strong sense of responsibility. Simone commented,

> I guess it made us wake up a little more, like make us grow up, knowing that we were having a little more responsibilities ahead of us, starting now to keep track of

> things, how to make money available. It's more or less like he [music teacher] was treating us like we were adults and had to take responsibility for our own actions.

High expectations and demands made by arts instructors, coupled with positive results, inspired students to transfer a hard work ethic to academic areas as well. "Most of my teachers said that they needed to push me in order to get me to do something, so I tried to push myself. I was afraid to do certain things because I didn't want to look bad," the shy Serita remembered. But she found that the faith her dance teachers had in her aided her in confronting fears and doubts, and she credited them with her ability to meet challenges and take criticism.

With support from parents and teachers, students were able to identify and internalize some of the strategies and behaviors that made them successful in the arts and to see how those behaviors applied to other areas of their lives. Jasmine, from the Intermediate Cohort, clearly articulated her own motivation for success and an awareness of what it takes to be successful:

> I need to keep my grades up. So right now I'm trying to keep my 90 average where it is because if you lose like one point my mother will get on my case and make me quit music. I want to strive for it. I'm going to strive hard you know. I spend a lot of time doing homework . . . . I know I want to go to college. Hopefully, I will have a career in the arts. I'm taking drama now in case the music doesn't work out. I'm also very athletic so I want to go to a high school with a good track team. That might get me a scholarship for college. But I plan to major in the arts.

The awareness of specific self-regulation strategies and productive behaviors was enhanced by the discipline and learning skills needed in the arts and the immediate positive feedback of arts instructors, classroom teachers, and parents. Yvelis who faithfully attended the ArtsConnection-sponsored after-school tutoring for 3 years proclaimed, "ArtsConnection changed my life. My grades went up. When I started, my grades were down. ArtsConnection helped me so much." She also felt that behaviors she learned in dance class transferred to her academic work. "I started to do much better. Now I had energy to control myself and focus on one thing. [I] now apply that to my classes." As a result, Yvelis said her teachers "expect more from me and I'll give them what they want. I don't want to be kicked out of dance class."

Daphne, a novice from the Elementary Cohort, elaborated further about the relationship between skills she needed to be successful in music and those that seemed to help her academically:

> I think you call it mind over movement. You have to really listen to the song and while you're playing you still have to listen to make sure you're in the right key. So you use your mind to tell you the part of the song and you use movement to keep playing it and doing what you're doing. The mind over movement has helped me listen and take notes at the same time.

Simone too, identified strategies she could transfer from music to her academic classes. She said:

> Memory helps me when I'm in English and I do spelling. Memory helps me remember exactly where the letters are. It helps me spell the words correctly and memorize the definition of a word . . . . I also learned that you need to make sure you understand the first thing before you have to do the second. Let's say [music teacher] is teaching you a part. If you don't understand how to play it, you can't go

> on and learn the full part . . . . In school, especially in my accelerated course, Earth Science, the teacher gives you notes every day. So every night I go home and I study them. I memorize what I study and then I go to school the next day and take more notes. I go home and study notes from both days.

Andrea mentioned the self-discipline dance imposed:

> Dance made me aware of what I should know academically. When you're younger, you relate counting steps to counting math. Or your knowledge of memory and how fast you can pick up and pay attention. It's a way of learning academic [material] in a more creative way. There's anatomy involved, [as well as] tuning in visually and musically.

In short, students' desire to achieve in the arts fueled their work ethic. Successes made them aware of the specific strategies they used to regulate their learning. This confidence led to establishing higher goals and applying specific strategies to accomplish these goals.

Identity

As students reach their adolescent stage of development, their need to establish an identity is at crisis level (Erikson, 1968). This identity is often contingent upon being accepted by their peers. As students began to see themselves as professional artists, they were also developing a strong bond with their talented peers. They formed their own support group. Together they worked towards reaching shared goals and reinforced values modeled by their arts instructors. Erikson (1963, 1980) would define this process as successful resolution of the identity crisis typical of the adolescent years. During adolescence, identity and emotional health are closely tied to the perception of cognitive strengths. In this way, students are able to visualize how they may fit into the adult world (Reilly, 1992).

In the Intermediate Cohort, membership in the performing group gave students a sense of purpose. They believed in themselves and felt that they each played a vital role in the group's success. Each student had a job in the group. Elections were held for president, treasurer, secretary, and a communications chair. When discussing the group, students agreed that they would not be as successful on their own. Tarik explained, "Being in the group helps us get a better understanding of who we are and what we can do." "Being in the group helps to keep you focused," explained Albert. David added, "Being in the group helps me to tolerate people . . . . It's our common interest in music that brings us together and forms the basis for friendship."

Simone reflected on the depth of the connection that music engenders. She commented:

> I think it's a big part of the music knowing that you have somebody that shares something with you. It's kind of hard to explain. I think it's mostly the music, knowing that you have people there who know what you know, and you can sit there and talk to them about the same thing over and over and over again. And you can play the music with them and you understand them. When you talk what they call "music talk," they understand you. I don't think that anybody else would understand you and them in a conversation. It's like you're connected through your mind. It's like this telepathic thing, you know?

All of the group members agreed that the performance of any member affected all the others. David said. "I was panicked when my group mates almost kicked me out of the

group because I wasn't carrying my weight. I was letting them down. Lucky for me they gave me another chance."

Perhaps Jasmine's comments summarized best the power of knowing who you are and striving with others to meet common goals. "I am motivated to stay in the group because I enjoy being a well-known musician who is doing something constructive outside of school, and I love the reaction from the audience!"

By the High School-Adult Cohort level, the participants had built a personal commitment to their art and sought communities and relationships with groups and individuals with like-minded goals and interests. Five of the 6 in this study pursued arts instruction throughout their high school years in specialized public high schools that offered high quality arts training and/or professional arts institutions. There they intermingled with larger numbers of people with whom they shared common interests and forged personal and professional alliances.

As discussed previously, group identity was particularly critical for novice boys enrolled in the dance classes; a domain traditionally dominated by girls. As the minority, the males comprised an internal support system from which they could withstand peer pressure and social stigma. The boys took special satisfaction in being part of groups within which they could collaborate and compete.

It appears that membership with others who have similar interests, goals, and talents enhances the development of a personal identity. This sense of identity enables students to overcome obstacles and remain committed to their goals with minimum distraction.

Resilience

Resilience describes the ability some individuals display to bounce back from adverse experiences (Beaedsly, 1989; Rutter, 1987). It is a willingness to be proactive in overcoming obstacles to reach goals (Demos, 1989). According to Ford (1994), resilience is strengthened and nurtured when children have positive and strong relations with peers, family, and community, where they can find both emotional and physical support.

As described in the first research question in the study, students were all faced with some type of adversity and individual challenges. Some faced situations that could have sent them down a pathway of underachievement and helplessness where they might have felt they had no control over their lives. Yet, in spite of these circumstances, most were able to overcome some of the potential obstacles through external support and their strong desire to excel.

The responsibility Angela took on because of her mother's illness, and her ability to continue to pursue her artistic and academic aspirations after her mother's death, demonstrates her resilience and determination. Other students in the study who faced the death of a parent or close family member also found strength in their artistic pursuits and in the support they received from their peer group and arts teachers. They credit their artistic focus for helping them get through emotional crises and giving them an important outlet for their energy and time.

Students in the Intermediate Cohort all faced situations with the potential to negatively affect their lives, especially Gloria and Albert. Both students received minimal support from their families due to the crises the families faced. Illness, lack of money, limited family time, and frequent moves might have placed these two youngsters at risk for success in school, socially, and in talent development. However, both found strength in the group. Gloria talked about the group's role in engaging in something positive even though

many of her peers ridiculed her about her involvement with the program. "I stay in the group because it gives me something to do other than being out on the street with my friends who will probably get into trouble anyhow."

Albert says the group remains the most positive aspect of his life.

> Without [the group] I'd have no real friends who love music the way I do. School is awful and nothing is right. My uncle was killed, there's no music at school, and no opportunities for me. But my Mom keeps asking me the same question over and over and over again. When are you going to play music again?

Involvement in the arts supports resilience both in facing serious crises and in numerous day to day issues. Simone says, "I mean people can say what they want, as long as you know what's true inside and out, there's nothing to worry about whatsoever, nothing."

As suggested in Research Question 1, students demonstrated resilience in their commitment to artistic development in response to pressure from peers and the concerns of parents. The demands increased greatly as the reality of career and school choices and the need to earn outside income began to impose on students' time and energy. The resilience needed to maintain the pursuit of artistic goals is striking in light of the growing pressures and needs. None of the High School-Adult Cohort had the advantages of financial support or highly involved parents or siblings to help them navigate the difficult and often frustrating path of talent development. Finding teachers, auditioning for performances and companies, applying for scholarships, as well as the training, rehearsal, and performance process, require a high level of personal risk taking and resilience to deal with disappointment and failure.

Evidence of Successful Achievements and Behaviors

Success for the students in this study was defined in three dimensions: a) the degree to which they were able to develop their talent, b) their academic progress and aspirations, and c) behaviors that demonstrate personal development that can help them in other areas of their lives.

Specific benchmarks outline the nature or criteria for success at each age level. For the High School-Adult Cohort, demonstrated success in talent development included awards, scholarships, and professional level training. Academic progress was seen as successful progress in or completion of high school and engagement in postsecondary education leading to the accomplishment of goals. Observable behaviors involved the application of individual talent in career or personal life and the discipline and motivation demonstrated in pursuing interests and responsibilities.

For the Intermediate Cohort, artistic development was measured by teacher evaluations, awards, scholarships, professional engagement in the art form, and continued arts instruction in or outside of school. Academic success was defined as good progress (B average or better) or completion of junior high school or above average grades in high school. Awareness and application of personal success strategies in the arts and other areas and the active pursuit of outside interests were evidence of successful behaviors.

For the Elementary Cohort, success in talent development was measured by positive evaluations by arts instructors and students' stated interest in continuing talent development after elementary school. Academic success included sustaining or improving achievement levels on reading and math tests in elementary school. Behaviors were more difficult to observe directly for the Elementary Cohort. Data from interviews with students, parents, and teachers attempted to ascertain future goals to gauge current level of awareness and

motivation. As can be observed in Table 8, a majority of the Intermediate and High School-Adult Cohorts samples fulfilled the requirements for success at their particular stage of development. Outcomes were incomplete for the Elementary Cohort, but at the end of the data collection 9 of the 11 elementary students were making good to excellent progress in the YTP, 4 were taking dance or music lessons on their own outside of school, and 2 had applied to arts magnet intermediate schools. One student (Sara) had moved away, 1 (Bobby) had been dropped from the program due to poor attendance. Of the 6 students who began the program with average to below average academic achievement, 3 had shown significant improvement on standardized reading or math tests and/or grades, and 3 had stayed relatively unchanged.

A compelling finding of the study was that becoming a professional artist was not the ultimate career goal for most of these students. Even the elementary school students harbored few illusions about the viability of the arts as a career. Parents, teachers, and arts instructors reinforced the value of pursuing the arts for their own sake, not as a means to fame or financial reward. Those who have pursued a performing career are keenly aware of the need to balance their time and attention with other potential career options. Serita discovered dance therapy, Randall and Gloria are in fashion design, David and Albert in business, and Angela in psychology. Unlike some young artists from more affluent backgrounds, these students have little interest in waiting tables as a way to pursue their art. During the process of talent development they became aware of their potential and asserted their need for financial security and independence while continuing to practice their art form.

Developmental Summary

The qualities of experiencing flow, demonstrating self-regulation, developing a personal identity, and exhibiting resilience appeared early in the learning process and continued to grow during the course of instruction. At the novice stage, students began to experience the joy of participating in their art form—a sense of flow. They saw for themselves how hard work could be fun and that the work reaped very obvious benefits. For a few of these students it was the first experience of success in school. Teachers began to view them differently—as competent students with potential. As a result, the students' self-efficacy improved and they experienced personal examples of the connection between effort, cooperation, and success. Students began to be able to articulate some of the things they did that made them successful in the arts and could connect learning behaviors in the arts with their approach to academics. Students identified with their peers in the dance or music program, formed friendships, and socialized outside of school. For students who had few friends or whose life at home was difficult, arts group membership and lessons were a positive distraction—building resilience and identity.

At the emerger stage, the personal qualities became stronger and qualitatively different. To continue talent development, students had to assume greater responsibility for the type and frequency of their instruction. Public performances for the emergers were accompanied by more pressure. Rehearsals were far more challenging than during the novice stage and students had to exercise patience and stay focused on long term goals. Emergers in the Intermediate and High School-Adult Cohorts also faced increased academic demands requiring more active self-regulation strategies to set goals and use time wisely. As they reached intermediate school, all of the students set high academic goals and expressed confidence that they could manage their time to accomplish both their artistic and academic objectives. They clearly articulated how they could apply strategies that were successful in the arts to academics and other goals.

Table 8.

Summary of Outcomes in Three Dimensions

Name	Dimensions	
Andrea High School-Adult	T- A- P-	professional dancer with several small companies successfully completed high school, B average maintains dance career with job, family, and training responsibilities
Angela High School-Adult	T- A- P-	member of Alumni ensemble college psychology major took on major family responsibilities and maintained educational and artistic goals after death of mother
Randall High School-Adult	T- A- P-	cofounder of hip-hop dance troop, member of semi-professional dance company enrolled in college in fashion design daily schedule includes dance, part time job, and school
Serita High School-Adult	T- A- B-	high school dance major B+ - A average in high school, dance therapy major at college found career involving the arts when injuries prevented her from pursuing a performing career
Tawana High School-Adult	T- A- P-	touring internationally with gospel musical, member of national championship double Dutch team, alumni dance program high school theater arts major with B+ average persevered in arts training despite severe family problems and several changes of elementary and intermediate schools
Tony High School-Adult	T - A- P-	professional dancer with major company, choreographer, teacher successfully completed high school pursued goals throughout high school, maintains training regime
Albert Intermediate	T- A- P-	member of semi-professional music ensemble B average in all subjects except math in middle school tried to maintain music involvement despite family illnesses and frequent moves
David Intermediate	T- A- P-	member of semi-professional music ensemble A average in private school involved in music and many other outside interests, while maintaining school work
Gloria Intermediate	T- A- P-	member of semi-professional music ensemble valedictorian of intermediate school class, honors classes in intermediate and high school dramatic changes in attitude, interpersonal relationships, and leadership ability
Jasmine Intermediate	T- A- P-	member of semi-professional music ensemble B+ average in middle school involved in music and many other outside interests, while maintaining school work
Tarik Intermediate	T- A- P-	Selected for Disney Youth Orchestra, member of semi-professional music ensemble, attends Julliard School C+/B- average in high school improvement shown in school behavior
Simone Intermediate	T- A- P-	member of semi-professional music ensemble high school honors courses major changes in confidence and maturity

Note: T-Talent Development, A-Academic Progress, P-Personal Development.

In the High School-Adult Cohort, whether students were at the emerger or expert stage, all four of the factors seemed well established and internalized. The choices they made to keep the arts alive in their personal lives were related to the joy of learning and performing. Those who chose to pursue a career in the arts were well aware of the financial risks, but felt driven to follow their passion. Those who felt a need for financial security still recognized the importance of maintaining their artistic talents and interests for their own well-being.

For experts, the experience of flow was a compelling factor in their quest to find a satisfying life. By this stage, students demonstrated superior self-regulation as they set goals, and began to take steps to actualize these goals. The experts demonstrated discipline and motivation to work hard to become independent and achieve success. Their identity seemed less contingent upon group membership, but more related to how they viewed themselves personally and professionally. They knew who they were and understood their strengths, interests, and practical concerns and realities. They had overcome many obstacles along their journey and demonstrated confidence that they were resilient enough to find success in their lives.

CHAPTER 4: Relation of Findings to the Literature on Talent Development

The purpose of this study was to understand the process of talent development in a culturally and economically diverse population of urban youth, and to see how talent development affected their lives. We had hoped to isolate specific obstacles faced by this population and then discover factors that allowed the youngsters to overcome those obstacles on their journey from novice to expert. Additionally, we tried to evaluate the worthiness of talent development in the arts as an educational goal for economically disadvantaged students. In this section, we present an analysis of factors and outcomes of talent development known to be critical to talent development. An important goal is to analyze the relevance of existing research to urban populations from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, especially those from lower middle to low economic status.

Research Question 1—The Obstacles

As described earlier, students in this study faced a series of obstacles that could have prevented them from developing their talent. These included family dissolution, unsafe living environments, lack of opportunities for talent development, negative peer pressure, and the challenge of pursuing personal dreams in light of economic reality. A review of the literature on talent development reveals a lack of information regarding talented students from lower income circumstances. The literature on talent development mostly considers individuals from families with considerable disposable income. As mentioned previously, Csikzentmihalyi et al. (1993) intentionally avoided low income subjects from their research on talented teenagers because of potentially confounding problems faced by students living in poverty.

The obstacles faced by the students in this study are not usually found in studies of more advantaged students. For more advantaged students, talent development is often dependent upon parents making considerable investments of time and money, finding opportunities for their children, monitoring their child's efforts, and maintaining an involved relationship with their children. Often one parent devotes his or her days to chauffeuring the child to and from lessons, chaperoning them to practice sessions and events, and monitoring practice sessions (Bloom, 1985; Csikzentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993).

These were not the conditions surrounding the students in this study. Unlike their more advantaged peers, these talented youngsters encountered a series of hardships faced by many urban students in the course of their daily existence. Demographic information reported for the families in this study reveal that they reflect economic conditions typical of urban minorities. The median annual earnings of Hispanic men are less than two-thirds the figure of non-Hispanic—$14,141 (National Council of La Raza, 1991). Forty-three percent of African-American students live in poverty and 67% of these students live in single family homes (Waxman, 1992). Many of the students in this study live in neighborhoods where crime, drugs, and gang activities are common. While safety issues are not discussed in the literature on talent development, there are volumes describing the urban environments where many poor minority families live (Gup, 1992; Kozol, 1991; Scott-Gregory, 1992).

Moreover, students in this study were at great risk for having their talent go unrecognized. While New York State and City Curriculum Frameworks require a minimum level of arts instruction for graduation, in reality, budget cuts have left a majority of New York City schools with little or no regular arts instruction (Chira, 1993). Selection for high

level programs in the arts at magnet schools and within regular elementary and intermediate schools is often based on academic achievement as well as artistic ability. Because a large percentage of the students selected for the Young Talent Program (YTP) were reading below grade level (approximately 65%) when they were identified, many would probably have been passed over for their less talented but higher achieving peers. Research confirms that economically disadvantaged minority students are greatly underrepresented in talent development programs (Ford, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1993). According to the U.S. Department of Education report *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (1993), poor and minority group children have limited opportunities to participate in high quality early childhood programs that emphasize the development of strengths, rather than focusing on deficiencies. The report calls for increased opportunities for talent development for students with gifted potential, particularly minority and economically disadvantaged students who may need extra support to overcome barriers to achievement.

Aside from economic barriers, minority group students face a number of social issues that can hamper the active pursuit of their talents. Olszewski-Kubilius and Scott (1992) found that economically disadvantaged minority students felt pressured by their peers to underachieve academically. Fordham (1988) explained this phenomenon as "acting White," which is viewed as being disloyal to one's cultural value of underachievement. To achieve, then, is to be like one of them—White. Ford (1991) found peer pressure to be a primary contributor to underachievement among African-American youth. This phenomena can also be seen in the arts where gender issues, cultural traditions, and competing peer activities can all increase negative peer pressure on talented students (Majors & Bilson, 1992).

Another obstacle facing students in this study was the frustration they felt when they lacked the resources or encouragement to follow their dream or aspirations. In Reis, Hébert, Díaz, Maxfield, and Ratley's study of high ability achievers and high ability underachievers in an urban high school (1995), the ability to set aspirations and follow dreams distinguished the achievers from underachievers. The high achievers sought out supportive adults who helped them, whereas the underachievers had no plan of action directing them towards their goals. Whitmore (1980) found that reversing a pattern of underachievement may depend on the student selecting a goal. In this case, the students' intrinsic drive to achieve overcame their individual patterns of underachievement. It appears that success depends on first having the dream and then finding others who are willing to support that dream.

In short, this study confirms that talented students from economically disadvantaged environments face obstacles that could permanently inhibit them from developing their potential and becoming productive adults. While these issues rarely appear in the literature on talent development, they are well-documented in the literature on issues facing economically disadvantaged students and families.

Research Question 2—Success Factors

Overcoming adversity to achieve success is a complex phenomenon. For each student in the study, success was the result of a unique mix of support systems and personal attributes and values. The most important success factors identified in this study closely mirrored the factors previously reported in the literature on the development of talented individuals. The key differences between the success factors found in this population and those usually referred to in the literature on talent development were in form,

not content. For example, when Bloom (1985) refers to family involvement and support, he describes parents who make special arrangements for their child, who monitor their practice and study habits, buy instruments, pay for lessons, and regularly meet with teachers. Families in this study were deeply involved and supportive, but the support involved the extended family rather than the parents alone. While they may not have money to pay for lessons, time to attend teacher conferences, or transportation to chaperone students to lessons or performances, family members changed jobs, juggled work schedules, arranged vacations, and made financial sacrifices to support their children's pursuit of their talent. The resulting factor—family support—was certainly present in each family in the study, regardless of their financial or personal circumstances.

The primary differences between the findings of this study and those conducted with more advantaged students lies both in the nature of the factors supporting talent development and the combination of social, personal, programmatic, and adult support needed to overcome the potential obstacles that more advantaged students do not face. The following sections will compare and contrast our findings with those of Csikzentmihalyi et al. (1993) in their study of talented teenagers in the arts and sciences in a Midwest suburban community. This particular study was chosen because, while it validated previous studies on talent development (Bloom, 1985; Feldman, 1986), it focused on adolescent issues and included artistic talent. Csikzentmihalyi et al. isolated 7 factors associated with talent development. In the discussion that follows, we list these factors and comment on how they relate to the success factors found in our study.

For successful talent development to occur, the participants must:

1. *Have skills that are considered useful in their culture.* This factor related to both early interests, family values, and opportunities provided by ArtsConnection to identify talent. Students in our study all were identified for talents in music and dance. While artistic skills provide limited hope of financial rewards and career opportunities, music, and dance are a prominent part of family and community life for most of the students and families in the study. In the Latino, African-American, and Eastern European cultures represented, the arts seem to be more valued for their own benefit than in the American culture as a whole. Students are not taught that participation in the arts is limited to artists. They see adults and children who participate in the arts in church, at family gatherings, and as personal hobbies. The students' talents were often first noted by their families and then confirmed by the identification process used by ArtsConnection. The YTP curriculum includes music and dances, reflecting a variety of cultures to take advantage of the students' background and interests. Whenever possible, the teaching artists and site coordinators employed in the program reflected the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the students.

2. *Have personality traits conducive to concentration (e.g., achievement and endurance) as well as to being open to experience (e.g., awareness or sentience and understanding).* The students' need for challenge, their response to demanding professional instruction and performing opportunities, and their positive reaction to a range of different artistic styles reflect personal characteristics common in successful artists. Throughout the talent development process, these students showed a remarkable ability to concentrate and seek out challenges. They reported their frustration when the curriculum was not complex or challenging to them. Interestingly, success in meeting challenges within their talent area also seemed to fuel their commitment to achieve academically. Many of the students, initially, did not show these qualities in their academic subjects when identified for the YTP. However, as they began to achieve success in dance or music, and with the academic support provided to them, their grades improved and many earned academic honors.

When students encountered different styles and techniques during studio classes than they were used to in school, the most advanced students responded most positively. Many of the dance students commented that while they found techniques such as ballet and flamenco strange at first, they were motivated to learn more about them and intrigued by the new skills. Likewise, the advanced music students worked especially hard when they were introduced to pieces from different traditions such as classical, Native-American, and Chinese music.

3. *Have learned habits conducive to cultivating talent. For instance, talented students spent less time just socializing or hanging out with friends. Instead, they shared more active and challenging pursuits with friends. They did not have to give attention to chores and after school jobs. They were able to devote time and energy to cultivating their talent.* Rigorous arts instruction and the rehearsal and performance experience gave students in our study a powerful model for habits that support productive accomplishment. As Simone said, "When it comes to things that you have to get done there are certain things you must put aside in order to keep yourself on track. You can't make your mind available to too many things, [or] you will go crazy." The Intermediate and High School-Adult Cohorts' participation in Saturday and after-school classes demonstrates their commitment to talent development. "A lot of my friends didn't understand. 'You going to dance class?' they said. Saturday I was getting up and saying, 'I got to go to dance class.' "

Because talent development began in groups at the elementary level, there was a ready made peer support system. Students associated with other peers who had similar goals and values. Together they practiced and prepared for performances. When they reached the intermediate and high school-adult years they had become self-directed and found the means to fit arts training into their life. They established new relationships at professional studios, at school, or in performing companies. Few of the High School-Adult Cohort maintained contact with their YTP peers, but many expressed the opinion that being part of a cohort at the elementary level provided an example of a friend/peer group that shares the same interests and goals. As Simone put it, " That group gave me a model for my friendships now."

Because of the economic realities and family circumstances detailed in Research Question 1, students in this study were not relieved of significant home responsibilities. Families of the Elementary and Intermediate Cohorts insisted that school work and home responsibilities had to be completed before arts practice or special rehearsals. Parents and students agreed that it was important for students to learn how to set priorities and exercise time management.

4. *More conservative in their sexual attitudes and aware of the conflict between productive work and peer relations.* Talent development and personal goals to graduate high school and attend college appeared to have taken precedence over the need to "hang out" with their school mates. For instance, one student commented that having a girlfriend was not as fulfilling as the relationship he had with his music. In fact, based on statistics showing the rate of teenage pregnancies among economically disadvantaged adolescents, the absence of this occurrence among High School-Adult and Intermediate Cohorts is noteworthy. These students had the courage to withstand peer pressure and focused instead on accomplishing their goals.

5. *Families provided both support and challenge to enhance the development of talent. Families of teens in this study were more cohesive and interested in their children's talents. These families were perceived typically as integrated, supportive, and harmonious. Families were involved with monitoring their children's homework schedules and encouraged them to achieve.* This finding was confirmed by Reis et al. (1995) in their

study of economically disadvantaged talented achievers and underachievers in an urban high school. The achievers mostly came from intact families who felt that education was of the utmost importance and conveyed that to their children, even though the families may have had little involvement in the high school itself. While the families in this study faced many hardships, dislocations, and personal problems, they too cared deeply about their children's education and communicated consistent support for their education and talent development activities. Most are single parent households, but rely on other family members to provide needed assistance. The families may not, as a group, be described as harmonious, but they found the means to provide the emotional support the students needed to pursue their talents and interests.

It seems that the identification of talent potential in their children influenced and encouraged the parents to provide hope and support for its development. The fact that an outside agency acknowledged and reinforced the parents' perception of their children's potential talent may have positively affected the families' motivation to encourage their children, even when faced with their own challenges.

Many of the parents could not offer academic support to their children due to their own lack of education, available time, or emotional energy. The YTP's tutoring component satisfied the need for direct academic assistance during the elementary school years. This support gave students the academic foundations for more challenging demands at the secondary level. Too often such students are placed in a position to play catch up and tend to drop out instead (Ford, 1994).

6. *Liked teachers best who were supportive and modeled enjoyment in a field. Teachers modeled a professional identity. Students must be able to feel that they have something unique to contribute to the field and that their teachers recognize their individual skills.* Because this program involved professional artists who love what they do, the students had powerful role models. The artists, carefully chosen by the ArtsConnection, not only exhibited a passion for their field, but genuinely cared about the students and their development, both as human beings and performing artists. As a Young Talent music teacher explained, "I consider working with kids and teaching young people an apprenticeship, a part of the profession. It's not that you're a professional musician and then you're doing a side thing. It's not like that."

Results of this study demonstrated the powerful impact the artists had on the students. Even the adults who are out of school clearly recall their first ArtsConnection teachers and credit them with lighting the spark that started their talent development journeys.

7. *Talent development in the arts tended to evoke strong positive feelings or expressive involvement rather than focusing on whether their talent was useful.* This factor was clearly replicated by the results of this study. The intrinsic need to pursue arts training, early interests in dance or music, and the drive to perform were all central to the success of the students. Indeed, the love of music and dance fueled their desire to work hard. As described previously, most of the students were not primarily focused on having a career in the arts, but emphasized how dance or music was integral to their being. While they cared about the effect their performance had on an audience, it was their ability to express themselves through their art that prevailed.

8. *A talent will be developed if it produces optimal experiences. Memories of such experiences intrinsically motivate talented teenagers to accept new challenges and work hard to achieve them.* This factor relates to the ability of the student to be in flow while engaging in a talent area. Being in flow was clearly experienced by students in this study.

Although this factor contributed to the students' success in overcoming obstacles, it was seen as an outcome of talent development and will be discussed further in the next section.

While this study confirms much of what has been found to be associated with talent development, it provides unique information about talent development in economically disadvantaged and minority group students. Our findings show that it is possible to overcome "deficits" in the environment by producing a talent development program that attends to the needs of the population. Rather than accept the fact that family contexts or academic underachievement preclude success, we have shown that purposeful provision of appropriate support can act as a catalyst to assist families and students to overcome the many obstacles that could thwart their development.

Research Question 3—The Outcomes

This study revealed poignantly that focusing on talents contributes to the development of personal qualities shown in the literature to be critical to self-actualization—becoming psychologically healthy and productive adults. These qualities are resilience, self-regulation, identity, and the ability to experience flow. Interestingly, each of these attributes is used to define one another in the literature. Clearly, they are correlated and interact reciprocally, each having the effect to strengthen the other.

Resilience

Resilience as a construct first appeared in the field of medicine and psychiatry where researchers sought to explain why certain people can adapt to incredible hardships while others are permanently debilitated. Much of the research focused on children and the factors that constituted their ability to adapt and cope with extreme stressors in their lives. A synthesis of these studies indicated that resilience depended on a triad of factors: personal disposition, nature of the families, and the community of people whose strengths and similarities provide support for them (Garmezy, 1983). Children seen as resilient were positive, flexible, and felt in charge of their world. They tended to manifest self regard rather than self-derogation. Families of the resilient children were supportive and exhibited warmth (Rutter, 1979, 1987). In single family homes, mothers compensated for the lack of a father figure. Families focused on the educational and psychological needs of the child (Garmezy & Neuchterlein, 1972; Werner & Smith, 1977, 1982). The community (schools, churches, social agencies, neighbors) in which the youngsters lived also offered support and encouragement. The community offered adult figures with whom they could identify (Fraser, 1974; Garmezy & Neuchterlein, 1972; Rutter, 1979). Several studies suggested that resilient children seemed to have at least one adequate identification figure among the significant adults who touched their lives.

Self-regulation

When the application of resilience appeared in the educational community, the definitions and correlates were expanded to include self-regulation. For instance, Kobasa (1979) used the term hardiness and described it as having a stronger commitment to themselves, a willingness to take action and to deal with problems, a positive and active attitude toward the environment, and a sense of purpose. Demos (1989) defined resilient individuals as people who take an active stance toward overcoming any obstacle and have a repertoire of strategies and skills to both cope with and tackle problems. Benard (1994) described resilient youth as effective problem solvers who are autonomous and have a sense of purpose. These descriptions imply that resilient individuals are in charge of their lives in

specific ways, which Bandura (1986) calls a capacity for self-direction. This capacity allows people to have some control over their behaviors. In other words, they regulate their behaviors by learning and applying strategies that allow them to reach personal goals. The more success experienced, the more confident people feel in their ability to regulate their own lives. This confidence positively affects how they view themselves, their willingness to tackle new and difficult challenges, and to set realistic goals (Bandura, 1986; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Zimmerman, 1998).

Identity

To be resilient and self-regulated, the research has shown that people must have a sense of identity (i.e., know who they are and how they fit into the larger context). Felsman (1989) sees resilient children as people how "function more autonomous, have a more articulated body concept, and have a stronger sense of separate identity" (p. 74).

Identity for gifted and talented minority adolescents is complex, because it is influenced by a range of both individual and cultural pressures (Linstrom & Van Sant, 1986). Students from economically disadvantaged environments may not be seen as gifted or talented because the schools may automatically identify these students with underachieving populations (Ford, 1994). Once identified, however, peers and families may disassociate themselves from the gifted students because of perceived lack of compatibility with cultural values (Clark, 1991; Ogbu, 1988).

> Young people from racial minority groups who have come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and who have recognized their own need to achieve often suffer emotional turmoil in climbing the ladder of socioeconomic status. The conflict between developing their own potential and succeeding in the larger society, along with the sense of loss at leaving their cultural community, can create an emotional tug of war. (Lindstrom & Van Sant, 1986, p. 64)

The conflict in identity will most likely develop when there is a lack of congruence between the home and school concerning values, attitudes, and behavior espoused in the home and school (Boykin, 1991). Ford (1994) argues, however, that students can be helped to form a positive identity by participating with groups of students of different racial groups and economic circumstances in activities based on common strengths and interests. In such settings economically disadvantaged talented youngsters should be encouraged to assume leadership positions.

Flow

The situations that will allow students to find an identity are related to those areas in which they are talented and can experience flow (Csikzentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993). Through these experiences they know who they are. Their autonomy, confidence, and identity blend together to provide that peak moment in which life can seem full of possibilities. The inner motivation underlying resilience, self-regulation, and identity is energized by engaging fully in challenges. The following story related by Csikzentmihalyi et al. (1993) describes how the experience of flow impacts on resilience, self-regulation, and identity.

> A musician in an earlier study recalled his first strong flow experience: improvising before a live audience. He was 16 years old at the time, and the thought of a live performance was still intimidating. His self-consciousness was one factor that had prevented him from letting go and risking genuine improvisation. The flow experience, however, made enough of an impact that he recorded the date, time, and

> name of the song along with his impressions on a piece of paper and stuck it in the back of his guitar. Understanding the experience and how to regain it became a conscious goal and he tried to find books that would help explain the workings of his mind. After several years, he realized that such experiences often came after weeks of practicing some new skill . . . . When the skill had become second nature and he risked improvising with it, he would sometimes become totally involved in an enjoyable experience. In this state of flow, he described feeling more in sync with the rhythm of the music and with his own emotions when playing something "new" with perfect execution. (p. 254)

This young musician's persistence to overcome his fears, his execution of self-regulation strategies to accomplish his goals, his identity as an accomplished musician as he experienced flow all combine to allow him to continue to self-actualize.

The four qualities of resilience, identity, self-regulation, and flow have been shown to correlate strongly with each other to allow individuals to achieve success. In fact, in studies that investigate factors distinguishing academic success from failure or underachievement among gifted and talented students, these factors are almost uniformly mentioned. In the Reis et al. (1995) study, two models evolved: one pertaining to factors influencing achievement and the other to underachievement. Achievers were found to set realistic goals, identified with other achieving peers, were self-regulated, and participated in challenging activities based on their talents. In the Reis et al. model, these factors and others resulted in [the core factors of] resilience and belief in self, which strongly supported achievement. The underachievers received less family support, demonstrated less self-regulation, participated in inappropriate peer groups, and perceived school as hostile and unrewarding. Inappropriate early school experiences, including a lack of attention to basic skills and to the students' individual gifts and talents, strongly contributed to underachievement at the high school level.

Ford (1994), in her study on recruitment and retention of African-American students in gifted education programs, found that social factors (identity), family factors (low resilience due to low expectations and interest in students' schooling), and school climate (few opportunities for positive identity due to low expectations) all contributed to the lack of minority representation.

Likewise Baum, Renzulli, and Hébert (1995), in a study seeking to reverse underachievement in gifted students, found that poor self-regulation, identity with inappropriate groups, no opportunity to pursue interests (lack of flow experiences), and social and emotional issues (poor resilience) were major contributors to the underachievement patterns. Through talent development, many of the students' needs were met and achievement began to rise.

Results of this study confirm the importance of talent development in promoting qualities necessary for success in life. These young artists became resilient as they overcame crises in their lives. The program provided role models and rigorous challenge in areas where students demonstrated talent and interest. The adult models illustrated and exemplified how to be successful. The experience of success gave students confidence in their abilities, which allowed them to develop individual self-regulation strategies and seek new challenges. As their abilities developed, they began to identify themselves as performing artists and capable human beings.

CHAPTER 5: Summary and Conclusions

A Talent Development Model

The findings from the three research questions revealed a set of interrelated factors and outcomes that were common across ages, cultural groups, and socioeconomic levels in the study. Figure 4 shows how the factors interact to develop the personal qualities and capabilities that helped the students achieve success in their talent area and in other aspects of their lives.

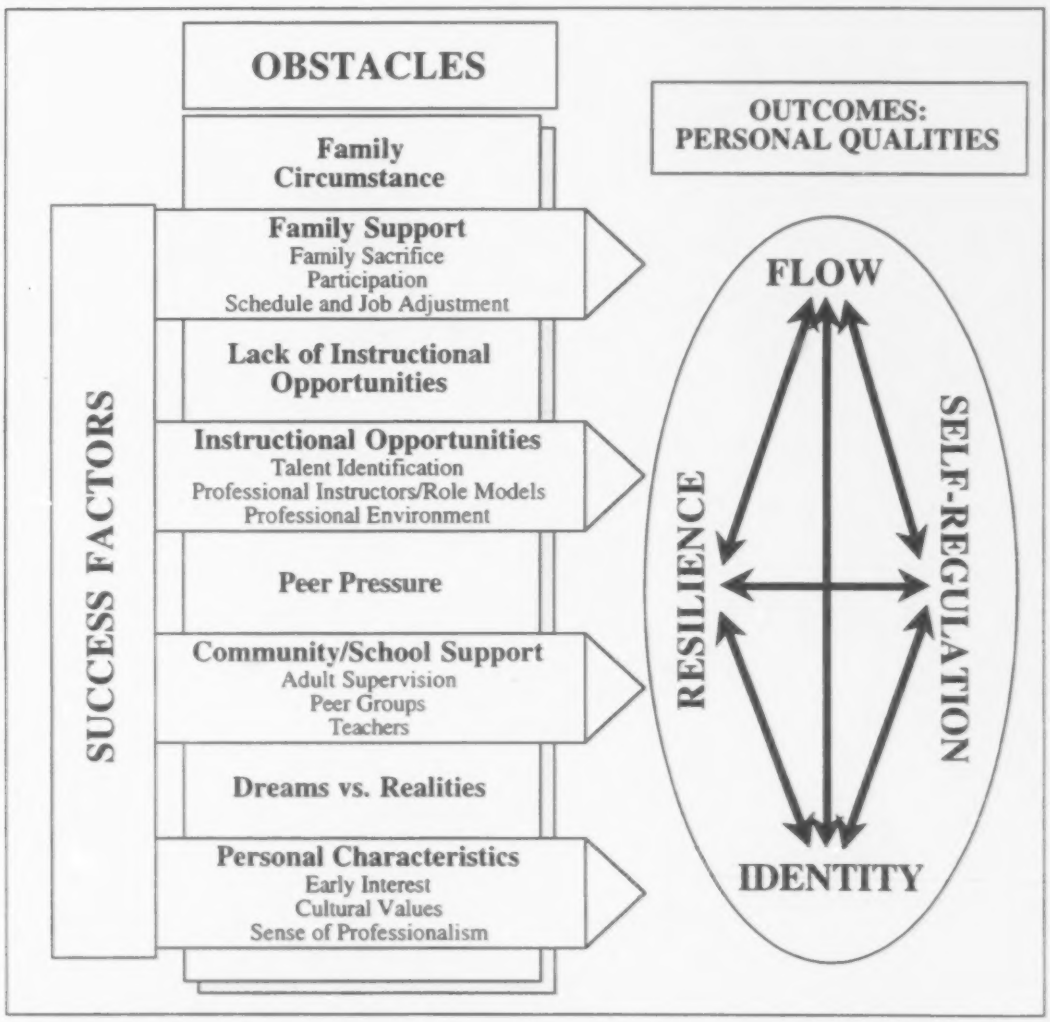

Figure 4. Model of obstacles, success factors, and outcomes.

As can be seen in the interlocking model, the success factors outlined in Research Question 2 contributed directly to the students' ability to overcome the obstacles found in Research Question 1. The success factors are grouped according to their primary impact on the obstacles, but a one-to-one relationship between obstacle and success factor would be overly simplified. For example, the role of the arts instructor could be a factor in overcoming any one or a combination of obstacles. In some cases, the artist's obvious concern for the students influenced a family's willingness to allow their child to participate in performances or after-school instruction. For others, the status of the artist within the school helped to alleviate negative peer pressure, and for those who aspired to an artistic career, the professional artist provided invaluable counseling and first-hand knowledge to help them balance their dreams against economic realities. Each obstacle was surmounted by support systems that varied in nature, depending on the age or stage of development and the talents, values, and motivation of each individual.

An essential feature of this model is its use of a broadened definition of support, specifically in regard to parent, school, and community support. While economic and personal challenges placed many obstacles in the way of talent development, family support was essential to the success of all of the students in the study. These findings contradict many common stereotypes about lack of involvement on the part of economically disadvantaged, single, working parents. Despite the inability of many parents to attend meetings, school events, and arts performances, further investigation revealed that family support extended to brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and neighbors. When parents and primary care givers were unable to be present personally, they made highly complex arrangements for their child to attend classes, performances, and events after school, on weekends, and in the summer. These actions clearly demonstrated the value the families placed on the arts and were frequently cited by the students as key to their continued involvement.

The high level of parental support is one of the most striking findings in the study. The parents' primary concern for academic achievement rarely hindered their encouragement of artistic talent development. Parents clearly understood and communicated the value of arts instruction for their children's overall development and personal happiness. While the High School-Adult Cohort faced serious decisions about the viability of a career (dreams vs. realities—Research Question 1), neither parents nor students saw the choices involved in pursuing the arts in black and white terms. Because of the important place the arts held in family and community life for these families, the students fully expected to continue participating in the arts even if they pursue other careers. As Angela put it, "I know that dance will always be part of my life and my children's lives."

Similarly, school and community support for the arts, which, in these cases, often appeared to be lacking, was shown to be vital to the students' success. Although there were few organized arts programs available in the participating schools and communities, and many other programs competing for limited space and time, the Young Talent students received strong support from teachers, administrators, and classmates, which bolstered their motivation and made it possible for them to attend classes during and after school. Given the existence of an instructional program, the key success factors tended to be the personal support provided by influential adults and friends. This finding emphasizes the need to involve the entire school and family members in the arts program to build understanding and support for arts instruction, regardless of students' academic standing or other issues.

In Research Question 3, researchers looked at the relationship of the students' personal qualities and competencies demonstrated in the arts to their achievements both in artistic and non-artistic areas. The patterns and interactions of ingrained personal characteristics, family and community values, and specific skills and habits developed in the

arts, revealed a number of links between talent development in the arts and general behaviors that can lead to success in life.

Students demonstrated aspects of the four personal qualities—identity, self-regulation, resilience, and the ability to experience flow—in differing degrees in response to the challenges they faced in school, at home, and in making choices about their education and continued arts training. While the study showed many ways in which these qualities were developed and nurtured in the arts, it was also clear that these students possessed personality traits and values, that initially drew them to the arts and helped them succeed there. Artistic success rewarded them with great personal satisfaction and public recognition, both of which reinforced the behaviors that led to success.

The interaction of ingrained characteristics and developed competencies can best be captured in Maslow's (1968) concept of self-actualization. Self-actualization refers to the application of all of one's internal resources to the accomplishment of one's goals. The drive and resourcefulness shown by the older (intermediate and high school-adult) cohorts to continue arts training while pursuing their other ambitions was a clear example of self-actualized behavior that served the students in both the arts and other areas. Figure 5 shows the reciprocal relationship of the personal qualities and competencies to the achievements observed, particularly in the two older cohorts.

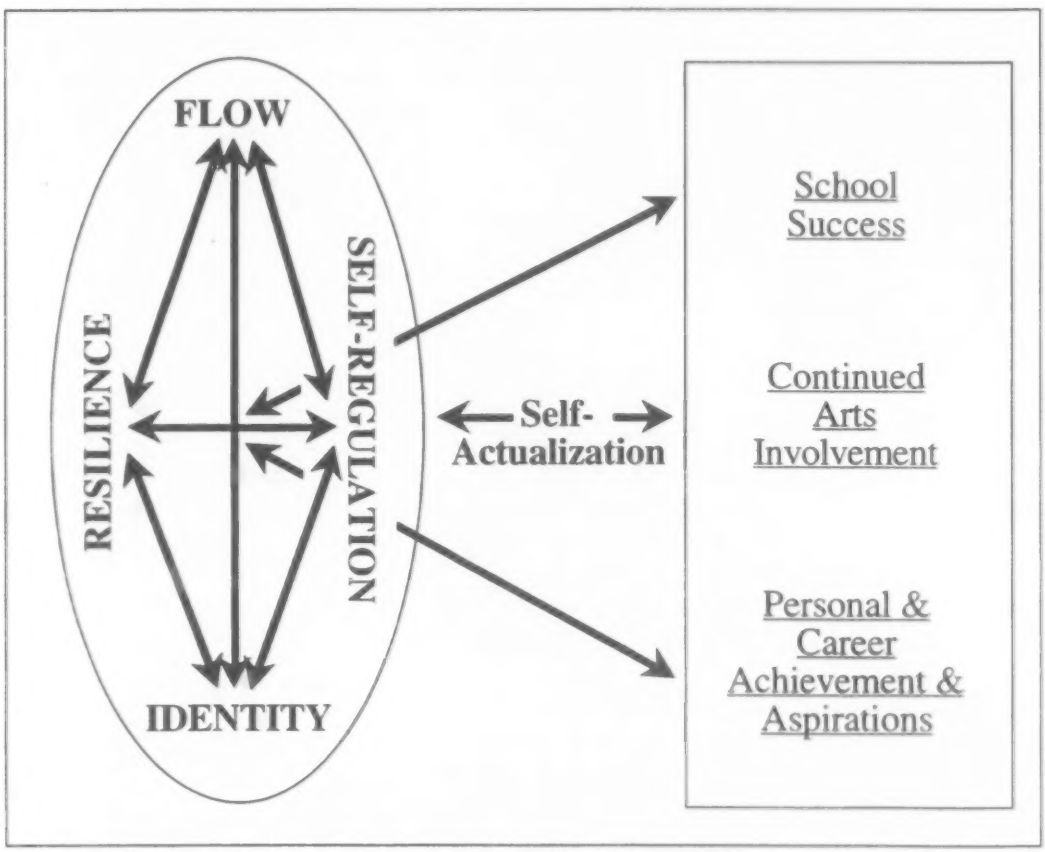

Figure 5. Personal qualities and competencies and observed outcomes.

The older students were able to articulate how their artistic experiences built their confidence and became a model for creativity, identity, and relationships. They felt that the arts provided an essential outlet for their feelings and a focus for their energy. Vygotsky (1971) called the arts, "the social technique of emotion" (p. 249), man's primary means of integrating and synthesizing the flood of sensory and emotional input. Through dance or music students could express themselves and their life experience contributed depth, meaning, and quality to their art.

In a strictly hierarchical model, the factor of flow might be listed first because the joy and satisfaction that students experienced in the arts underlie their motivation to make the sacrifices necessary to pursue rigorous instruction. In this model, flow is seen as part of a loop that is constantly enhanced by the other qualities. We see how the self-regulation and discipline required to keep up with school work, juggle work and family responsibilities, and pursue greater challenges put them into situations where they could experience ever greater rewards. The enjoyment and satisfaction of performing at a high level was attained through self-regulation and resilience, and each such performing experience motivated the students to further sacrifice. Likewise, the connection with the group that helped to strengthen students' individual identity was also reinforced and deepened by the mutual sacrifice and commitment to talent development and the shared need to continue to make art.

The competencies that have been enhanced in the students through the process of artistic talent development seem to have bolstered their strength, skills, and confidence to pursue both artistic and academic goals. They have a sense of purpose, poise, independence, and determination that is striking in contrast to many of their peers. The evidence suggests that for students identified as artistically talented in elementary school, given high quality, challenging instruction and adult support, even a relatively small amount of time working each week in the arts can be a powerful, highly effective means to stimulate positive growth and personal transformation.

The meaning of the arts in these students' lives goes deeper than making a living. A career was a dream for some students, but all were realistic about the need for having other, more secure, career options as well. Their motivation was fueled by the experience of flow and a deep need to communicate through the arts. Even the youngest students described themselves as artists and linked their successes to that identity. They could articulate strategies they'd learned for dealing with difficulties, expressing feelings, and facing crises in terms of their artistic experiences. The rewards of performing, being recognized and appreciated, being in a group, receiving scholarships, winning lead roles, and getting positive feedback from adults and peers were so powerful for these talented students that it became worth the sacrifice and effort to overcome the obstacles that stood in their way.

Limitations of the Study

A question that must be asked, but cannot be definitively answered by the study, is whether the students would have achieved the same level of success without the arts. Would the ingrained qualities and positive behaviors that made them successful in the arts have been turned to other interests if they had not discovered the arts? The literature in talent development emphasizes both the link between specific talents and the domain in which they are expressed, and the timing of the introduction of the domain in the development of the talent (Bloom, 1985; Gardner, 1990; Renzulli, 1978, 1995). While the positive outcomes show that students possessed the potential for success, the powerful and immediate allure of the arts and the many ways in which artistic experience became central to their identity

suggest that it is unlikely these conditions could have been fulfilled in other activities or domains. The changes in self-image, behavior, and school performance, highlighted most dramatically in the stories of Tony, Randall, Carmela, Albert, Simone, Gloria, Tarik, and Yvelis, suggest that arts involvement at a critical moment provided the catalyst to escape a potentially dangerous downward spiral. Students who were not struggling in school spoke just as forcefully about the importance of artistic pursuits in the direction and development of their self-image and future plans.

The study focused on participants in a single program at multiple sites. While students had different experiences in the various schools they attended, the instructional program in the arts was based on a specific set of goals and frameworks defined by ArtsConnection. Generalizability of the findings to other arts programs may thus be limited.

The location of the program in New York also presents certain opportunities and problems that may be unique to this setting. Arts instruction in the New York City public schools is uneven at best, possibly even less available than in other cities, but there are significantly more opportunities for advanced instruction in the arts outside of the school system. Many families rarely leave their immediate neighborhoods, but the public transportation system at least makes it possible to attend classes in other parts of the city, if the student and family is so motivated. In cities lacking such transportation alternatives, the lack of a car may make attending after-school or weekend classes impossible.

While the circumstances in economically impoverished neighborhoods in New York is similar to any large urban area, there was a wide variety of populations and conditions in the study that are rarely found in a single setting. Different ethnic groups, fluctuating immigration and housing patterns, local historical and political influences, and widely varied cultural resources make each school and neighborhood in this study function almost as a separate city. Further studies that look at each community in more depth could uncover a great deal about the unique opportunities and obstacles for artistic development in each setting.

Another limitation of the study is the method of purposeful selection of students, which restricts the representativeness of the sample. Students selected had demonstrated characteristics that suggested they had the potential to overcome successfully the obstacles they faced. While continued talent development and success in the Young Talent Program (YTP) and after graduation from elementary school were far from assured, the fact that most of the students maintained their involvement over the course of the study is not surprising. A more extensive sample or longer term study would be needed to follow the cases of students who did not continue talent development and to sample students who did not show initial potential for overcoming the obstacles. Further research is thus recommended to validate these findings in different settings and with a variety of arts instruction and program models.

Recommendations for Talent Development Programs in the Arts

It seems clear from the data gathered in this study that the most crucial external success factor was the existence of a school-based program that identified and developed students' artistic talents and interests. The most common comment from students and parents was, "I never would have started [dance or music] if it hadn't been for the Young Talent Program in my school."

It is equally clear that programs in economically disadvantaged communities with few arts resources and schools that are underserved by arts specialists must include support components that are routinely available to more advantaged children. Beyond direct school-based instruction, the YTP provided students and their families with information about further training opportunities and scholarships, arranged visits and auditions to magnet arts schools, made travel arrangements and provided chaperones, organized summer training, supplied equipment and instruments, and created a communication network among program families. These opportunities were cited again and again as key to the students' ability to continue in the arts and achieve success. The YTP design is summarized in Table 9.

Conclusion

This study has afforded a rare opportunity to study the experiences of a broad cross-section of urban students at different ages and phases of artistic development. Looking at a 20-year span of an arts education program, we have a common starting point and can trace the various paths taken from elementary to intermediate school, through high school, college, and into the professional and semi-professional art world. Though the primary goal of the YTP was not to develop professional performers, the arts have clearly occupied a central place in the education and identity of these students whether or not they were working towards an artistic career.

Table 9.

Summary of Program Components

Arts Instruction	
Weekly advanced instruction for core talent groups	25 weeks — two 45 minute classes per week
Introductory classes/Talent identification	5 classes for all students in Grades 4-6
Master classes at professional studios	10 sessions per year for advanced students
After-school student performing ensemble	90 minutes per week
Alumni Program	Weekly classes on Saturdays for graduates
Support Services	
Academic assistance (MAGIC)	60-120 minutes per week after school
Parent Liaison	
Workshops and performances for families	Saturday workshops at school, trips to ArtsConnection Center, student performances
Staff development workshops	4 Saturdays, 1 week Summer Institute each year, monthly ArtsConnection meetings

This study focused primarily on issues of arts education, but the conclusions are certainly relevant to any area of talent development. The particular challenges faced by these students may have made the pursuit of their interests and dreams more difficult than for more advantaged children, but the need for young people to find and develop their strengths and talents is universal. Students need to be involved in activities that interest and motivate them in their strength areas. They need a peer group with shared talents and interests. They are drawn to challenges and need supportive adults who appreciate their abilities and can provide role models and further direction. These apparently simple and obvious needs are increasingly difficult to meet. As schools continue to cut back on "extra" curricular activities, while extending the school day and school year, students have fewer opportunities to discover and pursue talent development in or outside of school. Working parents' concern with safety in the after school and evening hours, family responsibilities, and the proliferation of passive, independent indoor activities such as video games further limit opportunities for students to form bonds with peers and adults who can help to promote and advance their talents.

The arts do pose particular challenges that are different from other areas of talent development. Confirming ArtsConnection's previous research on artistic talent development, these data show that many artistically talented students are poorly served by the traditional instruction and testing methods in school (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997). In fact, some of the qualities of high energy, creativity, and expressiveness that are most appreciated in the arts get students into trouble in school. In some schools poor grades or other academic deficiencies disqualify students from arts activities. School arts programs are rarely challenging enough for talented students and professional instruction is expensive. Unlike sports, which maintains its status in most schools, or outside interests such as chess, computers, debate, or science, many parents and teachers do not recognize or appreciate the importance of arts study or its relevance to success in school and future opportunities.

These students provide powerful examples of the benefits of artistic talent development. All children deserve and need arts instruction in school, but for some, the arts will become a central part of their life. The stories told throughout this study remind us of what the arts can do to help overcome the challenges students and families face. For some, dance or music was their anchor amidst family turmoil. For recent immigrants and families who moved frequently, the arts were a primary means of assimilation into the culture of the school and the city. The arts group became a model for friendships and a source of confidence for students entering new schools and new situations. Performances were a source of immense pride for students, families, and whole communities. For many, classes at studios and trips to theaters were the first experience outside of their neighborhood and provided a glimpse of the larger professional world of the arts and culture. Ultimately, the skills and discipline students gained, the bonds they formed with peers and adults, and the rewards they received through instruction and performing fueled their talent development journey and helped most achieve success both in and outside of school.

These 23 young people and the more than 2,000 YTP graduates come from just 10 schools out of over 1,000 schools in New York City. They were fortunate enough to discover and have the chance to develop their artistic talents. The number of students who never have that chance is unimaginable.

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